SUSIE SUGARBEET

by

Margaret Ashmun

Illustrated by
Maginel Wright Barney

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Of course that wasn't her real name. It was Susie Siegefried, but her father took care of the fields of sugar beets on a big farm, and so the children at school teasingly called her Susie Sugarbeet. When Susie came from the city to live in the Little House on the farm, she thought that it was the nicest house she had ever seen; and when she met the two girls from the Big House, she thought that they were the nicest girls in the world. This story for girls from eight to ten is written in an extremely simple and lucid style. It has the homeliness and joy in small things which is the essential spirit of the child's book. There are six illustrations, end papers, and a jacket in color by Maginel Wright Barney.

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Susie Sugarbeet

SHE HEARD A GROUP OF BOYS BEHIND HER, SAYING 'SUGAR-BEETERS, SUGAR-BEETERS!' IN SHRILL MINCING TONES (*page 45*)

SUSIE SUGARBEET

BY

MARGARET ASHMUN

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
MAGINEL WRIGHT BARNEY

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TO

JACOB AND HERMAN LIETZ

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SUSIE SUGARBEET

CHAPTER I

THE BIG HOUSE AND THE LITTLE ONE

Susie sat on the top of a clothes-basket with a gray blanket tied over its top. In the basket were pillows and sheets. The basket and Susie and a number of other people and things were in a farm wagon which was jogging along the road, away from the railway station. On the front seat was Susie's father, with little Karl tucked in between him and the driver. On a low box next to the clothes-basket sat Susie's mother, with the baby, Bertha, in her arms.

'Hang on there, little girl,' called the driver, as the wagon clattered over a bridge. 'Don't get jounced off.'

The young man looked around, half laughing, and yet a little worried, too. Susie took harder hold of the edge of the basket, and hung on. She wondered how far it could be to the new home. She was in no hurry to get there. She wanted a nice long ride, even though she had to be bounced up and down on a clothes-basket in the back of a wagon.

It was a sunny day late in April, but the wind was

chilly. Susie's coat was thin, and her short legs were cold as they hung over the edge of the basket. Her hands were red and chapped. She had thought it was too warm for mittens, and anyhow she had lost one of her newest pair. She wished she had some mittens on now.

Spring was late; but there were tiny green leaves on some trees, and lumpy buds on others. Fields were green with winter wheat, or brown with recent ploughing. Sometimes the wagon passed a house, where women were hanging up clothes or putting milk cans out to air. At one house, a dog ran out and barked fiercely. Susie drew up her feet, forgetting that the dog — a small one — could not get at them. Three big boys came walking along the road together, wearing thick reefer jackets.

'Yah! Sugar-beeters!' cried one of the boys.

'Sugar-beeters! Sugar-beeters!' echoed the others.

Susie stuck out her tongue at them; but she did not really care if they did call her and her family 'sugar-beeters.' She had heard that often enough. Besides, that was what they were. Her father and mother were coming to Mr. Bolton's farm to care for the sugarbeets which were to be raised for a big company who dealt with the sugar-makers. This company sent men and women around to different farms, to plant and raise and harvest the beets. All summer Susie's father and mother (and even Susie herself) would look after the beets; and then, when the big

roots were harvested and carried away to be made into sugar, the family would go back to the city for the winter. Susie had always been a sugar-beeter. Her family had been shifting about ever since she could remember. Susie was only nine.

Her mother looked tired and worried as she sat on the box in the back of the wagon; but the baby was quiet, wrapped in a checked shawl. Susie would have liked to peep in at the little rosy-faced thing, but she was afraid of waking it, and also of falling off the basket where she sat.

Now a big house could be seen, beyond a row of maple trees. It was a white house with a wide porch and many windows. Behind it were red barns with white trimmings, a good many sheds and chicken-houses, and a windmill.

'That's the place,' said the young man who was driving.

'That's the place,' repeated Susie's father, twisting about on the seat to look at his wife.

Susie gasped. Were they going to live in a fine big house like that? They had always lived in little houses. Sometimes the roof leaked, and sometimes there were no screens and the flies came in, and sometimes the plaster was off and the windows were broken. Susie pulled at her mother's sleeve.

'Mom, do we live there?' she asked in a loud whisper.

'*Ach*, no! not we!' answered her mother sharply.

'There'll be a little house for us, away back behind the other.'

Susie felt disappointed. She had hoped that by some good luck this fine house was to be theirs. But, after all, she thought, she might be scared to live in so big a house. Perhaps a little one was better.

The young man turned his team into the yard, where there were a wide lawn and long flower-beds with no flowers in them. A tall good-looking man came out of the side door of the house.

The driver called to him, 'Here's the sugarbeet crowd, Mr. Bolton.'

The older man came toward the wagon. 'How do you do?' he said. 'Everybody all right?'

'Yes, all right,' answered Susie's father, whose name was Herman Siegefried.

'The house is down there,' said Mr. Bolton, pointing to a road or lane which ran between the barns. 'You'll see it when you get past the clump of trees.'

Susie stared about, open-mouthed. It was a pleasant place. The man was pleasant, too. He didn't talk loud or cross, she thought, nor laugh very much. He spoke pleasantly, as if he really cared how they were and what they did.

They drove across a bridge which was just boards laid down, without a railing. Then, beyond the clump of trees, there was the house where the strangers were to stay all summer.

'Ah!' Susie's mother cried out as if she could not help speaking.

'Such a nice house, isn't it?' said Susie.

'Pretty good, eh?' said Susie's father, twisting around again in the front seat.

'Hi! Hi!' shouted little Karl.

The house was a story-and-a-half high; it was white with green shutters and a latticed canopy over the front door, where some budded vines were climbing. There was a fat red chimney in the middle, out of which blue smoke was curling. At the back was a long woodshed open at one side, and behind that was a small red barn.

The family scrambled down from the wagon, and the driver and Herman began lifting down the trunks and baskets and boxes. Susie and her mother went into the side door, opening into the kitchen. There was another back door which opened into the woodshed.

It was late in the forenoon, almost time for dinner. The kitchen was perfectly clean. In the bright stove a clear wood-fire was burning. A pail of milk stood on the table, and beside it was a loaf of fresh bread wrapped in a cloth. Susie's mother had tears in her eyes. 'Some one — so good,' she murmured. She squeezed Baby Bertha so hard that the little creature sighed and whined in her sleep.

Karl was stamping around saying, 'Hi, hi, hi!'

'Ssh, you'll wake the baby!' scolded Susie.

It was strange how well Bertha could sleep, with the boxes and the feather bed and other things being brought in and left in the front room or the kitchen. 'Oh, how nice!' Susie warmed her stiff chapped hands at the stove.

'Take Baby, Susie,' said her mother.

Susie sat down in her coat, her round blue felt hat tipped sidewise on her head, and held the heavy six months' old baby, while her mother rummaged in a box of tin kitchen things. Then her mother went into the pantry, and came out beaming.

'See! See what I found!' She showed eggs, boiled potatoes, and butter. There was even a jar of strawberry jam. 'Never before!' Mrs. Siegefried's broad pretty face was wreathed in smiles. 'Nobody ever had a fire for us before, or anything to eat.'

'It's awful nice,' agreed Susie, lifting the shawl to look at Bertha's face.

'Here. I'll find a place to lay her.'

Mrs. Siegefried took the baby and put her on the bed in the front bedroom. Then the house-mother bustled about, slicing potatoes, cooking eggs, and cutting bread. Herman brought in water and wood, and hunted in the boxes for dishes. There was a clean white oilcloth on the table, which would do for a tablecloth.

What a meal! Susie was very hungry. She had two eggs and all she wanted of the soft white bread, and plenty of the fresh creamy milk. And just

imagine having strawberry jam waiting for you, unexpectedly, to spread on an extra piece of bread-and-butter at the last! It seemed as if there were fairy creatures about.

'Mom! It's the nicest house we've ever had!' cried Susie, finishing her bread-and-jam.

'I should say it is,' replied her mother.

In the front room were a carpet, a couch, a looking-glass, and some chairs. Two bright pictures hung on the wall.

'I'm going upstairs,' announced Susie.

She ran up the narrow stairway between the walls, and found two bedrooms. There was a bed in each room. '*I can have a room*,' whispered Susie. She did not dare think too much about it. She had never had a room of her own.

She ran downstairs again. Baby Bertha was crying and had to have her bottle. How good the warm fire was! Mrs. Siegefried took the baby while Susie cleared the table.

Karl was shouting: 'I saw little horses! Mom, there's ducks in the ribber!'

Susie ran to the window. There were ducks, four of them, bobbing and swimming solemnly in the stream which ran not far from the house.

'A river — and ducks ——' breathed Susie. 'Oh, what a lovely home!'

She was happy and sober too. It seemed as if this house were all that any one could wish. She did not

mind now about the big house with the porch and the windows. 'We've got just the nicest house in the world,' she said to herself. She wished she could show it to Luisa Ringeltaube, who had been her chum at school in the city. Suddenly she thought of something. She turned back to her mother.

'Mom, are you sure they'll let us *stay* here?' she asked. Her face was puckered with distress.

'Sure! Sure!' Mrs. Siegefried was too busy with the baby to pay much attention to Susie. 'This is our house now, and we stay here — till the beets are out of the ground.'

'They aren't *in* yet!' cried Susie. The seeds had not even been sown in the great black fields. It would be a long time — almost years — before the beets were sown and sprouting, and then thinned and weeded, and then harrowed with a horse-drawn cultivator, and then pulled and topped and carried away.

'We can stay here always — almost,' sang the little girl. 'We can stay here al-most al-ways.' An impulse took her. She dashed out-of-doors, followed by Karl.

'You must take care of Bertha,' her mother called after her. 'And don't let Karl go far away.'

'No! I'm coming right back.'

Susie went out in front of the house. How clean and white it looked, with its fresh paint and its green-slatted shutters! Susie wondered what the vine could be, that climbed around the gable.

'We'll have flowers out in front,' she said aloud. 'I can pick 'em and put 'em on the table.'

She ran around the house on the side toward the stream. There was a long grape-arbor, though the vines held only reddish knobs where the leaves were going to be. There were currant bushes and long straggling prickly raspberry bushes, and little trees that might have cherries or plums. Susie wanted to explore the little barn; but Karl was on his knees beside the brook, holding to an alder bush and peering into the water. The ducks had floated down the stream and sat paddling and staring.

The wind was sharp. 'Karl, you got to come in the house!' said Susie.

'Aw — w ——' began Karl; but Susie pulled him by the arm. His round cheeks were red and he was shivering.

'Come on.' Susie took him by the hand and almost dragged him inside. 'Oh, Karl,' she was chanting, 'don't you like our house, don't you like our house?'

Karl only grumbled at being hauled about. A house meant very little to him, one way or the other.

CHAPTER II

THE KITTEN

THERE were two front rooms downstairs. The front door opened into one of them, and then next to it was the bedroom, where Susie's mother's precious feather-bed had been laid and patted smooth. There was a small stove in the sitting-room, but no fire had been lighted in it. A little heat crept in from the kitchen. Really, the kitchen was the nicest room, with windows on two sides, and blue oilcloth on the floor, and the comfortable, brightly polished stove. There was a table to eat on and another to work at; and there was a sink with an iron pump at the side.

Susie's mother was singing to the baby. Herman was out looking for the grocery store which the driver of the wagon had said was 'just over there a ways, near the schoolhouse.' Susie and Karl were warming their hands, when a man passed the windows. *Clop-clop* sounded his knuckles against the door.

Susie scuttled to the far side of the stove. Karl took hold of her hand. Mrs. Siegefried opened the door with the baby on her arm. There stood the tall man whom the new family had seen in the yard beside the big house.

'How d' do?' he said cheerfully. 'I came to see whether you're all right. Seems sort of strange—eh?'

'Yes, yes. We are all right,' said Mrs. Siegefried,

talking fast because she was shy. 'It was so good to find the house warm — so good, I can't tell you. And things ready for dinner; we were all so hungry. Some one thought about us.' There were tears in her eyes again.

'Oh, that's all right,' said the man. 'We just didn't want you to stay cold and hungry, you know. You have three children — just these here?'

'Yes, three.'

The man patted the baby's fat cheek, and looked down at Susie and Karl, making themselves small beyond the stove.

'They'll like it here. Plenty of space to run around; plenty of milk for 'em, too. And these two youngsters'll go to school.' Susie and Karl blushed and squirmed. 'Do you like to go to school?'

'Yes, sir.' Susie loved to study, and to hear the teacher read aloud. Sometimes her mother read her a German fairy story. Susie longed to be able to read much and fast, and have a great many books of her own.

'That's good,' the man was saying. 'There's a schoolhouse down the road a way — about half a mile. Pretty good teacher, they say. My girls go into town to school. We take them to the train every morning.'

'So? You have girls?' Susie was glad that her mother could speak for her. She could not say a word to this strange man.

'Yes. We think they're pretty nice.' Mr. Bolton had a look of pride. 'Well, I'll talk with your husband, Mrs. Siegefried. If he's a good worker, there'll be plenty for him to do when he's not tending the beets. He can earn quite a lot — harrowing, splitting wood, mending fences, and so forth.'

'Good,' answered Mrs. Siegefried gratefully.

'Here, kids.' Mr. Bolton reached into his pocket, and pulled out two big red apples. 'It's a good thing the baby hasn't any teeth,' he said.

Susie took her apple with a timid murmur, crooking her knees in a curtsey. Karl took his in his two hands, his bright blue eyes shining, his cheeks as red as the apples. He made his mouth go with a 'Thank you,' which had no sound.

'You're welcome. Well, good-bye. My girls will be down to see you.' Mr. Bolton was off, closing the door quietly, and flashing past the windows again.

'He's a nice man,' Susie burst out, biting into her apple.

'Yes, he's a fine man,' said Mrs. Siegefried. 'He's been good to us already.'

Susie and Karl ate their apples. The afternoon slipped away. Herman came back with an armful of groceries and an oil can. Mrs. Siegefried was unpacking boxes and trunks and hanging away clothes. 'We have good places to put them,' she said with a sigh of satisfaction. Susie took care of the baby, and filled the lamps with oil, and washed the lamp chimneys.

When Baby Bertha was asleep on the bed again, Susie came close to her mother and looked up into her face.

'Mom, do I have a room?' she said.

'Yes, my Susie,' said her mother. 'For you and Karl, each a room. It is fine, this house.'

'Which, Mom, *which*?' Susie could hardly wait.

They went upstairs. 'Here, this is the best for you,' said the mother.

Susie jumped up and down. She was to have the larger of the two bedrooms, with two windows close together, and a little clothes closet under the slant of the roof. There was no carpet and there were no curtains. A white iron bedstead was fitted with a clean new mattress. There was a worn-looking dresser with a looking-glass. A washstand with a bowl and pitcher stood at the side opposite the windows. A brown chair with a cane seat stood against the wall.

'A room — all my own,' sang Susie.

It was not a very nice-looking room, but it seemed wonderful to her. She felt as rich as a princess.

'Karl can have the other room,' said Mrs. Siegefried. It was smaller than Susie's, and had only a bed, a chest of drawers, and a washstand. Karl would not care for much besides.

'Don't I have some curtains?' asked Susie.

'No, I'm afraid not,' her mother said, as if curtains did not matter much. 'I am using all I have downstairs.'

'Do they cost much?' Susie hardly dared to ask.

'Enough. Everything costs enough,' was the answer.

'I know.' Susie tried not to care about the curtains. She had the room, and she would not ask for anything more.

Just before supper, the two Bolton girls came to the house. They knocked on the side door and Susie had to go and open it.

'We came for just a minute,' said the taller of the two, a bright-faced, dark-eyed girl. 'Mother sent these rolls.' She held out a warm soft parcel, wrapped in a clean dish towel.

How Susie's heart was beating! Such pretty girls they were, with such lovely clothes! They would never look at her.

'Your name is Susie?' asked the older girl.

Susie nodded. She could not find her voice.

'I'm Beatrice,' said the dark-eyed girl; 'and this is Eleanor.' Eleanor was more slender and her eyes were gray. Both girls had bobbed hair, curling at the ends.

Susie nodded again. Standing there in her short-waisted, long-skirted dress of blue gingham, which her mother had made, and her heavy laced shoes, she felt strange and awkward. Her light fine hair was braided in two pigtails tied together with an old red ribbon.

Mrs. Siegefried came into the room. '*Ach*, the

young ladies!' she said, smiling broadly. 'Susie, make them sit down.'

'We can't stay. We just brought something,' said Beatrice. The girls had turned toward the door.

'We hope Susie will have a good time here,' said Eleanor. 'We'll do all we can for her.'

'That's good,' said Mrs. Siegefried.

All at once the girls were gone, and Susie was left blinking and ashamed. She had not said a word to them.

'Why did you stand there dumb?' scolded her mother. 'You should be nice to them, and speak friendly.'

Susie hung down her head, and tears blinded her eyes. She had been too 'scared' to talk. Now she wished that she had said something. The girls would think she was dull and that she did not like to have them come. They would not want to bother with her any more. They would make fun of her dress and her hair. Her heart was heavy as she helped her mother with the supper.

It was a cozy meal, eaten beside the fire, with the lamp burning brightly. Karl nodded before he had finished eating, and Susie dragged him upstairs to bed.

Soon she was sleepy, and glad to think about her own bed. Her mother had made it up with clean sheets and a warm gray blanket. Susie undressed quickly, by the light of a candle on the bare top of the dresser. She meant to lie awake and think how

fine it was to have a room of her own; but in five minutes, snuggled warm in her blanket, she had forgotten the adventures of the day, and was fast asleep.

In the morning, as soon as she was dressed, her mother said to her, 'You'll have to go for the milk.' It seemed that her father had been up to the Big House (or the yard near it), and had been told that his family might have all the milk they wanted, if they would come and get it when the separating was going on. So that is why Susie had to go and bring it in the morning, around seven o'clock.

A bit frightened, she started out with her pail, in the bright frosty air. There was not so much wind as there had been the day before. Susie felt warm and comfortable in her old brownish coat and round felt hat. She ran up the road, past the clump of trees, and across the bridge. She wanted to stop and look down into the water, to see whether there were any fish, but she hardly dared. She felt awkward and shrinking as she came up toward the big barns and outhouses. She could see people moving about, and hear voices from the milk shed. She hurried past the red buildings, wondering where she should go to get the milk. She could not bring herself to knock on the door of the Big House.

Then one of the Bolton girls ran out on the back porch.

'Why, hello!' she called to Susie.

'Hello,' answered Susie faintly. She came nearer. 'I — my Mom sent me ——' she began. 'She — said I was to get some milk.'

'Oh, yes,' said the girl, smiling, but not unkindly. She had on a dark blue wool skirt and a bright red jersey sweater. 'You'll have to go to the milk-house. Over there.' She pointed to a building smaller than the others. 'They're separating the milk now.' The buzzing of the separator came to Susie's ears. Susie hung back. It seemed as if she could not go into that milk-house among strange men, alone.

'I'll go with you,' said the other girl quickly. 'I'm Beatrice, you know.'

Susie gulped and nodded. How good of Beatrice to go with her! She could not find anything to say, but she felt grateful. She followed Beatrice across the yard and into the milk-house.

'Henry,' said Beatrice, 'here's a girl who wants milk for the sugarbeet people. Is it ready?'

'Sure. Hello, there, little girl,' cried the young man.

Susie saw that he was the one who had driven the wagon the day before. He filled her pail and put the cover on it.

'Be careful,' he said, smiling down at her. He seemed like a very good-natured young man. She tried to say a word of thanks, but it stuck in her throat.

She was starting for home, when Beatrice put a hand on her arm.

'Wait,' she said, 'I want to show you something. Can you stay a minute?'

'Yes,' answered Susie, wondering what was coming next.

Beatrice took a quart measure and had the men put some milk into it. Holding it out in front of her so that her dress could not get soiled, she led the way to one of the big red barns. The wide door was open.

'Come, Kitty, Kitty, Kitty,' called Beatrice, standing inside the door.

A beautiful black-and-white cat and four kittens came running and mewing out of the nearly empty haymow. They crowded around the girl's feet, looking up at the quart measure and crying with impatience. Beatrice filled a deep earthen dish which stood on the barn floor.

'There, you darlings!' she said breathlessly. 'Here's your lovely breakfast.'

The mother cat began to eat eagerly. The kittens, their little tails held straight up, nosed at the milk clumsily and made dainty lapping motions with their tongues. They were not quite used to eating out of a dish.

'Oh, my! How nice they are!' Susie found that she could talk now, without being scared. She loved cats, as all sensible people do. 'Oh, see the funny little things! Dast I take one up?'

'Yes. They're used to being handled. Don't you just love 'em?' said Beatrice.

'I love 'em awfully.' Susie took up one tiny fluffy black-and-white creature. Its pink mouth was dabbled and dripping with milk, which it was comically trying to lick off. Its gray-blue eyes stared wonderingly about. Susie pressed her cheek against the kitten's fur. It was marvelously soft, and it had a warm kitteny smell.

'Oh, I love you, little kitty,' she whispered.

'Would you like one for your own?' asked the other girl.

Susie gasped. '*Could* I have one?' she burst out. 'Oh, yes, I'd like one awful well. But I don't know,' she added, '— maybe my mom-ma wouldn't let me.' Her blue eyes clouded and her lip trembled.

'Maybe she would,' said the other girl hopefully.

'She'd think it was a bother,' quavered Susie.

'Maybe not. You can get plenty of milk for it here,' said Beatrice. 'It wouldn't cost anything.'

'I want it. I want it.' Susie put the kitten down tenderly among its lapping relatives. It bunted its little nose against the side of the dish, and then found the milk again. She stroked the smooth coat of the mother cat.

'I've got to go,' said Susie. 'I'll ask Mom if she'll let me have one. It would be awful nice.' She felt like crying, because she wanted a kitten so much.

She went out of the barn with Beatrice, and hurried home, as fast as the chugging and spattering milk in the pail would let her. The sun was warmer now, and

there was a golden light over the fields, black from the plowing, or green with winter wheat.

She met her father coming up toward the Big House, where he was going to work. He was a stocky, stooping man with a drooping light mustache and light blue eyes. He wore overalls and an old coat, out at the elbows.

'You been gone a long time,' he said to Susie, glancing at her excited, anxious face.

'I'm sorry. The girl talked to me, and — and ——' began Susie.

Her father was turning away. 'Your mother wants you,' he said over his shoulder.

Susie pushed into the warm kitchen, holding the pail of milk out from her skirt and her coat. Her mother was dressing the baby.

'Here's the milk,' panted Susie, setting the pail on the table. 'How do, Bertha-Baby. Oh, Mom! They've got the nicest little cats up at the Big House — at the barn, I mean; four of 'em. You ought to see 'em drink milk. Oh, Mom! the girl said I could have one. I dast — dasn't I?' She was pleading, almost weeping, in her eagerness.

Mrs. Siegefried frowned, buttoning the baby's dress. '*Nein*, we can't bother with a cat,' she said impatiently. 'It would be around underfoot — and eating so much — and you'd be fussing with it all the time. We've got a baby. That's enough, I say.'

'Oh, Mom!' Susie could not keep the tears back.

'It's so *pretty*. Its tail sticks straight up, and it has little white paws, and a white face, and its nose is pink. Oh, I have to have it.' Tears dripped down on the old gray-brown coat and blue gingham dress.

Her mother looked worried. 'Let it stay up at the barn,' she said. 'You can see it every day.'

'No-o-o! I want it for my own.' Susie put her arm over her eyes.

Karl had been sitting on the floor, lacing his shoes. 'We want a kitty,' he put in, looking from his mother to Susie.

Mrs. Siegefried sighed, reaching for little Bertha's knitted jacket. 'We-ell,' she said unwillingly, 'if you'll take care of it ——'

'I will! I will!' Susie danced about, wiping her eyes. 'Can I go right and get it now?' She put her hand on the door latch.

'No, no! You have to help here, and you'd better wait a few days till it gets older.'

'I want it now. The girl will be gone to school if I don't hurry.'

'You can get it after she comes home from school.'

'Dast I? Oh, Mom!' Susie threw her arms around her mother's plump form. 'Oh, I can't wait.'

'Yes, you can. Now, you take care of the baby, and let me get to work.'

All day Susie was happy, thinking about the kitten.

When the baby had gone to sleep, Susie went up to her room to make the bed. 'Mom-ma,' she called

softly, 'can I have a cover for my dresser?' She was thinking how she could make her room look prettier, though she liked it as it was.

'I guess I can find one.' Her mother brought out a dresser cover trimmed at the ends with lace which she had knitted herself.

'Oh, that's pretty,' cried Susie. She felt very elegant as she spread it carefully on the dresser. She brought her little pink china teapot, her chief treasure, and put it on the dresser, with a picture of Karl and two bright postal cards. She stood back and gazed at the dresser, thinking how nice it looked. 'I wish I had some curtains,' she murmured; but she did not like to say anything about them again. She could be happy, thinking about the kitten and the room.

'I hope Mom will let me take the kitten into bed with me,' she thought.

CHAPTER III

THE GIRLS FROM THE BIG HOUSE

When Susie went for the kitten, both of the Bolton girls were out on the porch. Susie had not learned their names yet; but she knew that the dark-eyed one was the older, and that her name began with B.

'Hello,' called Eleanor, the younger one, with the gray eyes.

'Hello,' answered Susie, blushing, as she always did when a stranger spoke to her.

The girls came running down the steps. 'Want to go after eggs with us,' asked Beatrice, 'before you get the kitten? You can have it, can't you?'

Susie was proud to be able to answer, 'Yes, I dast have it, and take it home now.'

'Wouldn't you like to get the eggs?' repeated Beatrice.

Susie nodded. Evidently the two girls had on their school clothes. They looked pretty and well dressed, with their short skirts and bright jerseys, and light silk stockings and low brown shoes. Susie wished that she had such good-looking clothes and could have her hair bobbed. She walked shyly along with the other girls, past the barns, to the chicken-houses and the long wire 'runs.' In the clean light chicken-houses were rows of nests with straw in them.

As the girls were walking through the yard, Eleanor had said, 'Your name is Susie, isn't it? What's your last name?'

'Siegefried,' answered Susie in a low voice. She knew it sounded like *Sugarbeet*, because the boys and girls at school had said so.

'S-siggy — what?' asked Eleanor.

'Siggy-freed, silly,' said Beatrice, who felt a great deal older than her sister.

'It's a kind of queer name,' said Eleanor, though she tried to speak politely. 'You're going to school, aren't you, in the white schoolhouse?'

'I don't know where it is yet,' Susie replied.

'It's not far,' put in Beatrice. 'Susie, you can take the eggs out first, 'cause you're the visitor.' They had come to the first chicken-house, and had stepped inside. 'The eggs have been gathered once to-day,' she added; 'but we always look for 'em before dark.'

'Here are two in this nest,' cried Eleanor. 'You take 'em out, Susie.' Susie peeped into the nest and saw the two pinkish-white eggs with a feather or two beside them.

She reached her little red hand in and took them. 'Oh, how nice they are,' she said, feeling the smooth shells of the eggs.

She heard Beatrice shouting, 'Oh, there are three in this nest.'

Susie turned around quickly, and down went the two eggs which she held in her hands. Smash! They

were a flat mess of yolks and shell on the floor of the coop.

'Oh! oh!' Susie was horrified to see what she had done. 'I didn't mean to. I didn't mean to,' she kept saying, looking with scared eyes from one girl to the other.

'It doesn't matter,' cried Eleanor. 'It doesn't matter at all.'

'Don't feel badly,' begged Beatrice. 'We have lots of eggs.'

But Susie would not take any more eggs out of the nests. She felt ashamed of her awkwardness, and afraid that the girls would not like her or want her to be with them. Soon a dozen or more of the eggs had been collected, and the girls turned back to the big barn where the kittens lived. The mother cat sat in the barn door, while the kittens rolled and played around her, biting and kicking and chasing one another in childish glee. The girls stood and watched them, laughing at the quaint antics of the little creatures.

'It seems sort of too bad to take one away from the others,' remarked Beatrice.

Susie began to fear that she might lose the kitten. 'I'll bring it back every day,' she said quickly. 'It can come and visit its relations.'

'M-m. Maybe that would be all right,' said Eleanor. 'Can you keep it warm?'

'I'll put a box behind the stove,' said Susie, with

a note of pleading in her voice. 'Maybe Mom'll let it sleep with me at night.'

'I hope she will,' answered Beatrice. 'Kittens do so like to be cuddled.'

She picked up the kitten which Susie had selected the day before, and held it close in her arms. She rubbed her face against its fluffy fur. Then she handed it over carefully to Susie, who received it with the tenderest touch of delight, putting her cheek down on the black-and-white softness of its back, and stroking its tiny head.

'Oh, you lovely little thing,' she murmured. 'I'm going to take you right home.'

Fearful that she might have to give the kitten up, she waited only long enough to be polite, and then ran home as fast as she could, her flaxen pigtails flying, her eyes bright with happiness. Panting, she pushed the kitchen door open, and stumbled into the house.

'Mom-ma! Karl!' she shouted. 'See! Here's my kitten.'

Karl greeted the newcomer with shrieks of joy. Little Bertha stared and put out her hands. Mrs. Siegefried, in spite of her unwillingness to have the kitten in the house, patted its soft fur and said, 'It's a funny little one, *nicht*? There's a nice box for it in the shed.'

Susie was busy till nearly supper-time, preparing the box for the kitten, trying to feed it, and watching

FEARFUL THAT SHE MIGHT HAVE TO GIVE THE KITTEN UP, SHE WAITED ONLY LONG ENOUGH TO BE POLITE, AND THEN RAN HOME

it while it curled up and slept in its warm nook behind the stove.

'The girls at the Big House are real nice, I shouldn't wonder,' said Mrs. Siegefried, as she fried potatoes for supper.

'They're nice to me,' said Susie. 'I guess they always will be. To-morrow they're going to be home all day. It's Saturday.' She was wondering whether the girls would come to see her, or ask her up to the House.

Mr. Siegefried came in to supper, tired but pleased. He and his wife talked together in German. Susie heard him say, 'It's a good place to work. The man is better than most. I think we have done well to come here.' Already, in spite of her shyness and her blunders, Susie felt as if she were going to be happy.

The next day she did not see anything of the girls till afternoon. When she went for the milk, they were not about (possibly they were sleeping later than usual). All the forenoon, Susie was busy at home, taking care of the baby, and wiping the dishes, making her own bed and Karl's, getting the potatoes ready for cooking, and doing such other tasks as a nine-year-old girl can do to help her mother. Mrs. Siegefried was washing and ironing clothes for her husband and the children, mopping the kitchen floor, and baking apple-kuchen and raised buns for Sunday. The kitten snoozed happily in his box or played prettily in the sunshine on the floor.

Susie thought a good deal about Beatrice and Eleanor. Probably they didn't have anything to do but play around and have a good time. Maybe their father would take them out in the automobile. How splendid it was to have a fine home and a car, and everything that girls could want!

It was an hour or so after dinner that Susie caught a glimpse of red through the trees, and saw that Beatrice and Eleanor were coming down the lane from the Big House.

'Hoo-hoo!' called Beatrice.

'Hoo-hoo!' answered Susie, her face showing a pinkish blush of pleasure through the fine white skin.

'We thought we'd come down and see how you are,' called Eleanor.

'All right. I'm glad,' stammered Susie.

'And how's the kitten?' asked Beatrice, her dark eyes shining. 'Did it cry?'

'No. I took it to bed with me, and it cuddled up and purred just as nice,' said Susie, to whom the kitten had already begun to seem like a loving little friend.

'You'll be so good to it that it won't be homesick. May we come in and see it?' said Beatrice.

'Oh, yes!' Susie felt proud to have these girls come into the house. She understood, of course, that they knew what the little house was like (for it was their father's, and they had probably been in it many times); but she felt honored to have them wish to

come, and she wanted them to see how comfortable the Siegefrieds were in the pretty little place. They had lived in other houses which were not so pleasant. She took the girls in at the side door of the kitchen, and they stepped into the clean bright room where Mrs. Siegefried was ironing the baby's little pink chambray dresses (white was only for Sundays and other dress-up days). Susie's mother looked the plump German woman that she was, in her blue calico dress and checked gingham apron. Her thick fair hair was braided, and the heavy plaits were brought up in a crown around her head. Her sleeves were rolled up to the elbow. Susie did not know how pretty and wholesome-looking her mother was. She was just 'Mom,' and looked neither well nor ill.

'How do you do, Mrs. Siegefried?' said Beatrice.

'How d' do?' Mrs. Siegefried set down her iron and smiled at the girls. 'You come to see my Susie and her cat?'

'Yes. We thought we'd like to see how they're getting along.'

'The cat is fine. Susie fusses with it the whole day.'

Susie stood squirming and rubbing the toe of her shoe back and forth on the floor. Then she brought the kitten for her callers to see.

'Oh, the honey!' cried both girls in chorus.

After they had discussed the kitten and played with it a while, Beatrice turned to Mrs. Siegefried again.

'Do you like the house?' she asked politely.

'Yes, it's fine,' answered the woman. 'It was so clean and nice when we came in.'

'Father had it cleaned,' said Eleanor, in her soft pretty voice. 'Mother said it would be discouraging if you came in and had to clean it yourselves.'

'It's awful nice,' ventured Susie. 'I got a room all my own.' She wanted somebody to see it.

'You have! That's splendid,' returned Beatrice, making her eyes big.

'You want to see it?' asked Susie, trying to be bold, but looking rather frightened.

'Surely.'

'Susie, she's proud of her room,' said Mrs. Siegefried, going on with her ironing. 'It isn't so much ——'

The three girls went up the stairs. Susie went inside, but the other girls stood back at the door and looked in. They saw the bare clean room, the iron bed with the gray blanket, the windows with no curtains, the chair, the old dresser with the swinging mirror.

'It's — it's a *good* room,' said Eleanor earnestly, in as well-mannered a way as she could. She did not know what to say.

'I've got a cover on my dresser. Mom-ma made the lace.' Susie showed the lace on the dresser-scarf. She thought that the girls must be admiring the little pink play teapot and the picture of Karl.

'The lace is lovely,' said Beatrice. 'How fine it is! It must have taken her a long time to make it.'

'No. Just a little while.' Susie stood waiting for the girls to say something more.

'I'm glad you have such a nice room,' said Eleanor, smiling, and smoothing back her brown hair in an embarrassed way.

'Yes, all to yourself, too,' added Beatrice.

They went downstairs. Susie felt disappointed. Perhaps they didn't think it was a nice room, after all. There wasn't much in it. Maybe they had rooms so much nicer that they thought this one was poor and shabby.

The two girls played with the kitten again, and talked to Karl, who had come in from out-of-doors. Then they said that they had better go home. Just as they were going, Beatrice turned around and said to Susie, 'Are you starting in at school on Monday?'

'I guess so,' answered Susie gloomily. She dreaded going to school to a new teacher and among strange children. 'I — I'm kind o' scared to go.'

'I'll go with you, the first day,' said Beatrice. 'I know the teacher a little, and all the young ones.'

'Oh!' Susie could not tell how pleased she was. 'How can you? You go to school earlier — on the train.'

'I'll ride in with some one, and I can be a little late. We'll telephone around and see who's driving in on

Monday forenoon. Or papa can take me to the trolley.'

'What if you're late?'

'I can be excused. This is a good reason, and they won't mind. You'd like to have some one go with you, I know.'

'She'd like it awful well,' said Mrs. Siegefried. 'Susie's a kind of scared girl, I don't know why.'

Beatrice smiled. 'I'm shy, too,' she said; 'and so is Eleanor. Well, I'll be ready and call for you a little before half-past eight.'

'I'll be ready, too. Oh, it's so good of you!' Susie felt relieved, because she had worried about school.

'Good-bye. Good-bye.' The girls were gone, running and skipping up the lane.

Susie still felt disappointed about the room. She wished the girls had said more.

'What you want to take those girls upstairs for?' said her mother, frowning. 'They have better things. They don't like a room like that.'

Susie winked back her tears. She wasn't going to let herself cry. But she ought to have had more sense than to ask the girls to go upstairs. She consoled herself by thinking how good Beatrice was, to say that she would go to school with her on Monday morning.

It was a good thing, perhaps, that she did not hear what Beatrice and Eleanor were saying.

'Oh, dear, it isn't a very nice room, is it?' said Eleanor, squeezing her sister's arm.

'Not very,' sighed Beatrice. 'Of course Father only put in the necessary things. They're supposed to bring rugs and curtains and bedspreads and pictures and — and other things, with them.'

'But they haven't any, I guess,' said Eleanor, wrinkling her pretty white forehead.

'I don't suppose her mother cares much about making things look nice — moving around so much, and not having much money to spend, and all,' returned Beatrice. 'I wish Susie could have a nice room — poor little thing.' Beatrice was twelve, and Susie was only nine; and Beatrice felt almost grown up, beside Susie.

'Maybe we could do something for her,' said Eleanor.

'Maybe we could. Come on. I'll race you to the bridge,' said Beatrice.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

On Monday morning, Susie was up early, and was washed and scrubbed to pink-and-white cleanliness. Her hair was tightly braided and tied with short red ribbons. She put on her clean blue-and-white checked gingham dress, made with the short waist and full skirt.

'Mom, girls don't wear dresses like this now,' said Susie, her voice shaking a little. How she wished that she could make her mother understand about clothes!

'Well, this is a good clean dress, with no holes in it,' said Mrs. Siegefried impatiently. 'It's good enough, I say.'

'But it's — it's different,' faltered the little girl. Being 'different' is a sad thing when you are nine years old and starting in at a new school.

'I can't see why that matters,' said her mother, pulling down the stiff folds of the dress. 'It's clean and all right. Do I let you go dirty like the Mierses and the Sarazins?'

'No, but ——' Susie could not say what she was thinking.

'There's nothing wrong with it, then,' said her mother, looking cross. 'I'd be ashamed to send a child to school not dressed right.'

'Then ——'

'I mean clean and whole. Fasten your stockings up a little tighter.'

Susie meekly fastened her stockings and tried to be glad that the dress *was* whole and clean. There was no use in arguing with her mother. But she kept thinking of Beatrice's short blue skirt and the pretty long-waisted jumper.

'Maybe some time I can have nice things like that,' she said to herself.

Her mother was putting up a little packet of sandwiches for Susie and Karl to eat at recess.

'Don't lose this now,' she said, tying up the bread in a piece of clean newspaper.

'No,' said Susie. She had to kiss her kitten good-bye before she started for school. 'Good-bye, honey,' she whispered. *Honey* seemed an especially nice word, since Beatrice had used it. 'I hope folks'll be good to you. Don't crawl around on the floor and get underfoot.'

Karl was being dressed in his school clothes, and Susie had to make a bow of his red tie. It was not easy work for her, especially since Karl kept stooping over to pat the kitten.

Just as she finished the bow, a hurried 'Hoo-hoo!' sounded from the yard.

'There's the girl!' Susie found it hard to say 'Beatrice.' 'Come on, Karl! Good-bye, Mom.' All in a flutter, the little girl snatched up her books and

her pencil-box and paper tablet, and took Karl by the hand.

'Good-bye. I'll have a hot dinner for you,' said Mrs. Siegefried, holding the baby.

Beatrice was outside, in her short well-fitted blue coat and hat.

'Ready?' she said. 'It's a nice bright morning.'

Susie had hardly thought about the weather, because she had been so excited. They followed a path out to the main road. The grass was beginning to be green along the roadside, and the hazel bushes were budded. A few anemones and bloodroot blossoms lifted their heads among the dry leaves.

'*Ach*, de flowers!' cried Karl. He rushed at the blossoms, but Susie held him back.

'Wait. We can pick 'em when we go home, Karl,' she said.

'All right.' Karl plodded on, carrying a pencil-box and a tablet like Susie's. Beatrice skipped, and Susie followed her stolidly.

'You don't feel scared now, do you?' said Beatrice, turning to her companion with a smile.

Susie nodded. 'Yes, I do,' she confessed. 'Awful scared.' She almost felt the eyes of strange children upon her.

'You needn't be. There aren't many scholars,' said Beatrice.

'There'll be enough.' Susie wished that the road had been longer. 'It isn't very far,' she said. She

could see the schoolhouse among the almost bare trees, and could hear the shouts of a troop of boys.

'No. That's good,' answered Beatrice. 'You can go home for dinner, except when it rains hard.'

Now Susie could see the schoolhouse plainly. It was a small white building, with a little entry-way jutting out at the front. There were some shrubs and trees about it, but they had no leaves to speak of, and it looked bare and stiff in the bright morning light. Some children stood on the steps. They stared boldly at Susie and Karl as they came nearer.

'How do?' they said to Beatrice, glancing at her respectfully.

Susie saw that they were nudging one another and whispering. Her face grew red and she stumbled nervously.

'Don't be scared,' said Beatrice, giving her a gentle push up the steps.

Susie felt like turning around and running home. Karl did not care at all who stared at him. He shuffled up the steps happily enough, clutching at his precious pencil-box.

'This is the girls' side,' said Beatrice, guiding Susie in at the right of the entry. 'Karl can come along. Hang up your things here.'

Susie, feeling lost and unhappy, took off her coat and her little round blue hat with the green ribbon.

Now they had stepped into the schoolroom. It was warm from a fire in an iron stove; and the sun shone

brightly in through the three windows on the east side. Rows of yellowish wooden seats ran up toward the teacher's desk. On the walls were blackboards and maps. A few children were chattering in groups. There was the teacher, putting a lesson on the blackboard. She was slender and her hair was short. She wore a reddish dress with a white collar. Beatrice went up behind her and spoke to her. The teacher turned around slowly, holding a piece of chalk in her hand. She looked as if she were trying not to scowl.

'Oh, it's you, is it?' she said. 'I'm surprised to see you. Are you coming back to school?'

'No; but I've brought you two new scholars,' said Beatrice.

'Oh!' The teacher let her eyes rest on Susie and Karl. She did not look very much pleased. Susie had flushed a deep pink. Her round face was anxious and beseeching. Karl stood sticking out his lips and kicking his foot along a crack in the floor. Nothing mattered much to him.

'M-m —— Who are they?' asked the teacher.

'The sugarbeet people,' answered Beatrice, 'from our farm, you know.'

'Oh, yes. They come about this time, don't they?' said the teacher. 'How do you do, children?' She spoke as if she did not want any new pupils. 'It's hard to fit anybody in at this time of the year. What's your name?' she asked, turning to Susie.

'S-Susie — S-Siegefried,' stammered the child in a faint voice.

Somebody behind her giggled. She heard two or three voices muttering 'S-Susie S-Sugarbeet.'

The teacher glared over her head. 'And what's yours, little boy?' she asked, glancing down at Karl, who went on kicking at the crack as if he had not heard.

'His name is Karl,' explained Susie.

'Karl Siege-fried? He's your brother?'

'Yes, ma'am.'

'Well, Susie, you may sit over here, and Karl over there,' said the teacher.

'I think they'd like to sit near each other,' put in Beatrice, in a pleasant but firm voice.

'Please — let him sit by me,' begged Susie.

'I don't see how I can. Well, he may sit across from you. Are these your books?' The teacher took the books and looked at them hastily. 'They'll be all right for the rest of this term. It isn't very long.'

'Susie's a little scared,' said Beatrice, eager to do all that she could for the stranger.

'Oh, she'll be all right,' answered the teacher. Susie wished that she would smile kindly, but she did not. 'I have to finish putting a lesson on the board.'

'Don't bother about us,' said Beatrice. 'I'll stay with Susie a little while.'

Miss Hart went back to her writing, and Beatrice took Susie and Karl around the room.

'See. Here are some plants that the girls bring,' she said. 'And look at the pretty pussywillows and plum blossoms on the teacher's desk.'

'I could bring some flowers,' said Susie, her eyes shining. She had seen some plum blossoms in the back yard, almost ready to come out, and some yellow marsh marigolds (cowslips, she called them) in a wet place beside the bridge.

'Yes, of course,' smiled Beatrice. 'Here's the dictionary. You don't have to use that yet. This cupboard has chalk and things in it. Look at that picture over the cupboard. Do you know who that is?'

'George Washington,' said Susie quickly, proud of her knowledge.

'Right. And that one?'

'Ab'aham Lincoln.'

'That's right, too. Now here are the books,' said Beatrice, showing a cupboard with glass doors.

'Oo-oo! what a lot!' Susie was hoping that she might read every one. 'Can we take 'em?'

'Yes, I think you can take 'em home.'

Karl stared, and stuck out his tongue at a boy of his own age, across the room. Susie stood looking out of the window, while Beatrice went to speak to a pretty girl with brown hair and eyes.

The teacher put down her chalk and eraser. She took a bell out of a cupboard; then she went to the outside door and rang it loudly, and came back. A number of sturdy red-faced boys came panting and

pushing in. 'Careful there!' called the teacher in a sharp voice. The boys dropped into their seats, snickering. Susie and Karl found their seats, which were well toward the front of the room.

Most of the girls had been in the room when the bell rang. They slid into their seats, smiling at one another. There were about twenty pupils in all. It seemed to Susie as if there were a hundred eyes fixed on the back of her head.

Beatrice leaned over her. 'You'll be all right, now,' she said.

Susie had a sinking feeling, as if she were being left without a friend. She sat stiffly through the singing, although she knew the song. She merely made her lips go, so that the teacher would not scold her for keeping still.

Then the teacher read for fifteen minutes out of a book which she had begun a few days before. Susie loved to hear a story. She did not know the beginning of this one, but she understood enough to be interested in it, and listen more eagerly, if anything, than the other children. She forgot about the eyes behind her. The teacher read clearly, and Susie heard every word. 'It will be nice if the teacher reads every day,' thought Susie. She could stand almost anything, if she could hear stories read. She looked at the cupboard with the books in it, and was happy to think that she might hold every one in her hand, and hear some of them read aloud.

Now the teacher had closed the book. All the pupils drew a long sigh. 'Oh, dear!' Susie heard some of them say in a whisper.

The teacher came over to her desk and said, 'You may read with the third reader class. Karl may come up in front with the newest scholars.'

Susie watched anxiously while Karl went stubbing up to the front seat. When the teacher pointed to words on a chart or on the blackboard, he stared and shut his mouth and kept still.

'Don't you know *any* words?' asked the teacher. Karl shook his head.

Susie wanted to call out, 'He *does* know *cat* and *boy* and *pig*.' But she was afraid to 'speak out in school'; so she sat wriggling and red and worried, and wished that Karl would tell what he knew.

When Susie's class went forward to read, the little girl was frightened and miserable. The other girls stood up boldly one after the other, and read in a loud voice, as if they didn't care who heard them. Susie was trembling to think that her turn to read would soon come. Then all at once, the teacher turned to her and said, 'You needn't read to-day, Susie.' Perhaps Miss Hart had noticed how shy the new pupil was, and felt sorry for her. Susie liked the teacher better after that. She looked at the other girls and wondered who they were. They wore short straight dresses, with narrow loose belts, and their hair was cut around their ears. Not a single girl had a dress like

Susie's, gathered in at the waist and hanging down to her shoe-tops. Not a girl had her hair braided into pigtails and tied with a ribbon!

When recess came (Susie called it rē̄'cess), Karl clumped out with the other boys. Susie sat in her seat, not knowing where to go nor what to do.

'Everybody has to go out,' said the teacher, standing behind her desk and fixing her eyes on Susie.

Susie remembered her sandwiches. She went out to the steps of the schoolhouse, and looked around for Karl. She found him running races with two other red-cheeked lads.

'Here, Karl.' She gave him two sandwiches, and then went and sat on the steps in the sun, and ate her own little lunch very slowly, so that she would have something to do. The brown-eyed girl to whom Beatrice had spoken came up to her and said, 'You're new, aren't you?'

Susie nodded, munching her bread and cheese. 'Uh-huh,' she said under her breath.

'Is your name Susie?' asked the girl.

'Yes.' Susie could just get the word out.

'Do you live on Bolton's farm?'

'Yes.'

'I guess you'll like it there.'

'I guess I will,' Susie agreed, looking sidewise at the little girl. 'I got a kitten,' she burst out, tired of saying nothing, and willing to make a friend.

'Oh, have you — already? Is it awfully cunning?' asked the other girl.

'It's a honey,' proclaimed Susie. 'It loves me and purrs. The girl — the girl that was here gave it to me.'

'Beatrice?'

'Uh-huh.'

'Beatrice is nice,' the brown-eyed girl remarked. 'My name is Allie Sykes. Beatrice asked me to speak to you.'

'I'm glad.' Susie felt happy because she had found some one who would talk with her. She had noticed that the boys and girls had walked around her and mumbled, glancing at her, as if she were some queer animal.

'Here.' Allie reached into her pocket and brought out a lemon drop. She put it into Susie's hot, moist little hand.

'Thanks.' Susie was surprised and pleased. She popped the round hard candy into her mouth.

Just then the teacher rang the bell. Susie looked wildly around for Karl. Puffing and panting, he was marching sturdily in with the other boys, speechless but contented. Karl did not talk much, but he liked to stamp and ramp around like a headstrong little pony.

It did not seem long until twelve o'clock. Susie worked out some problems from the blackboard, on her paper tablet; and she looked shyly around at the

other boys and girls, wishing that she felt as much at home as they did.

When school was dismissed, Susie put on her wraps, took Karl by the hand, and started off toward home. She heard a group of boys behind her, saying 'Sugar-beeters, sugar-beeters!' in shrill mincing tones.

'Hey! where'd you get your pigtails?' called one.

'Why don't she have her dress drag on the ground?' muttered another just behind her.

'Come along, Karl.' Susie pulled at her little brother's hand, so that he trotted and scuffled beside her.

The boys turned off on a side road, yelling back over their shoulders, 'Dutchy! Sugarbeet! Pigtails!' and bursting out into catcalls and hoarse laughter.

It seemed as if Susie could not get home fast enough. She plunged into the kitchen crying hotly, 'Mom, I want my hair cut off.'

Her mother, dishing up a steaming bowl of bean soup, said calmly, 'Oh, no! you keep your hair.'

'I won't keep it. I don't want to keep it,' wailed Susie. 'The boys — they make fun of me over my hair.'

'You don't care for them,' returned her mother, putting the soup on the table. 'Come, now, wash your hands and eat.'

'I do care. Where's my kitten? Yes, I do care, Mom,' Susie complained bitterly. 'They call me Susie Sugarbeet and make fun over my hair! Where's kitty?'

'Under the stove, and a good thing. She's been playing around on the floor. Come, now, eat, and you'll feel better. Boys always will be boys.'

Susie did feel better after she had had her dinner and cuddled the kitten and kissed Baby Bertha. She went back to school unwillingly, but she did not hang back or cry. The teacher asked her to read, and said, 'Very good,' when she had finished. Allie Sykes put her arm around her at recess and gave her another lemon drop, and life did not seem quite so hard as it had seemed at noon. When school was dismissed, she lingered behind the boys, pretending to pick some bloodroot blossoms, and the hard-hearted little scamps did not notice her. One of the big girls, Charlotte Nelson, smiled at her and said 'Hello,' and walked almost all the way home with her, and that was a help. Susie thought she might be able to get along at school, after all, without being too unhappy.

When she reached home, her mother was out in the yard, digging around some plants. 'Take off your school dress,' she said to Susie. 'I can't wash so much. You have to keep it clean.'

Susie took off her clean dress and put on one just like it, which she had worn before. Karl had to have his blue overalls on.

'Mom, I got to take my kitten up to see its mother,' said Susie hurriedly. She was afraid her mother would not want her to go.

'Oh, the cat is all right here. Let him stay,'

grumbled her mother. 'Bertha will soon wake up, and you'll have to take care of her.'

'Oh, I got to take the kitty to his mother,' protested Susie. 'He's lonesome. I'll just be gone a minute.'

'*Ach* — well ——'

Before her mother could say more, Susie had snatched up the kitten and was off like a shot. She ran up the lane and beyond the maple trees, and behind the milk-house where the red stalks of rhubarb grew. The barn doors were open into the wide shadowy spaces. Wisps of hay and straw lay along the floor. Nobody was about. Susie thought she might have to call and call for the mother cat; but there she was in the last warmth of the sun, lying on her side with the three kittens playing around her.

'Here's your baby, *Mutter-Katze*,' said the little girl.

The mother cat answered '*Prrr-rr?*' in an inquiring way, and then she licked the little furry head of her lost baby, and the baby nestled up to her and worked its tiny paws in and out so happily that Susie was glad she had come. The other babies sniffed at their brother, and went on with their romping.

Susie sat down on an upturned water-pail and watched the kittens and their mother. She wished that Beatrice and Eleanor would happen to stroll out to the barn. She heard horses at the back of the barn, chewing and stamping. A calf bleated and a cow answered. Doves cooed and muttered up in the

loft. 'It's nice here,' thought Susie. She could see the Big House through the trees. A stout woman with her sleeves rolled up came out and swept the porch and went back inside.

Susie stayed as long as she dared, hoping all the time that one of the Bolton girls would see her and come and talk with her. But neither of the girls appeared, and at last Susie had to take her kitten and go home.

'Good-bye, nice kittens. Good-bye, mother cat,' she said softly.

The mother cat looked up at her knowingly and made an anxious *Prr-rr*-ing sound of inquiry.

When Susie burst into the kitchen again, little Bertha was awake, and Mrs. Siegefried, holding the baby in one arm, was trying to put wood into the stove. The kitten had to go into his box in a hurry, and Susie had to sit down and hold the baby, amusing her with a bright tin spoon. Susie loved Bertha, and was willing to hold her and play with her; but the child was heavy and hard to handle.

'My! She's nice, isn't she, Mom?' cried the elder sister. 'How blue her eyes are!'

'Just like yours,' said the mother, beginning to cut up a cabbage.

'Mine aren't like that. She has such a funny little nose,' Susie went on, 'and no hair at all.' She passed her hand over the fuzzy head of the baby, and kissed the fat wrinkled place at the back of her neck.

Herman came in, his shoes muddy from the fields, where he had been mending fences.

'*Ach*, Herman, my floor!' exclaimed his wife.

Herman took off his shoes and set them out in the woodshed, and walked around in his stocking feet. He washed his hands and face at the sink, and wiped them on the roller towel. Then he held his hands out to the baby. 'Come to Pop,' he said smilingly. The baby looked up, trying to lift her hands. Her father took her in his strong arms, and she laughed and crowed and patted his face.

Susie went to set the table. 'Can we have the tablecloth, Mom?' she asked.

'*Ja*, if you want.'

As Susie spread the cloth, she wondered about the people in the Big House — what they were having for supper, and how the kitchen looked which they were going to eat in. She could hardly wait till she could see Beatrice and Eleanor again.

CHAPTER V

THE LONE PINE ROOM

Susie and Karl went to school the next day, and things were about the same. In the morning the teacher read again from the story book, and Susie sat listening, almost forgetting where she was. When she herself rose to read, in class, she stumbled on the words at first, and was corrected by the teacher in a rather sharp voice; but she soon grew surer of herself, and thought only of the story. She had never had stories enough. The Siegefrieds carried only a few books about with them: the Bible in English and German; a hymn book; Grimms' 'Fairy Tales'; a copy of 'Hermann und Dorothea' which had belonged to Mr. Siegefried's grandfather; and a farm book with something in it about beets. Susie longed to have some books of her own.

'Very good, Susie,' said the teacher, when the little girl had finished her page. Susie felt proud; but, after all, she cared more for the story than for the praise.

At recess, the brown-eyed girl, Allie Sykes, was nice to her. She gave Susie an apple, and asked where she came from, and how many brothers and sisters she had. When school was out at noon, Susie and Karl kept behind the loud-voiced boys, and managed to get home in peace.

Susie found that her father had been planting beets with the drill which Mr. Bolton had in his shed. When Herman had eaten his dinner, he spaded up a part of the garden which his wife was to use for her vegetables and flowers. Susie looked on, cuddling her kitten. After school she hurried home, so that she could see the planting. She liked to think how long it would be before the little seeds became big heavy dirty beets, which would be lifted out of the ground and taken away to change themselves into sugar.

Susie stood at the grassy edge of the long field, and watched her father driving Mr. Bolton's two gray horses, hitched to the wide drill which dug a straight shallow trench, dribbled the seeds into it, covered them with dirt, and scattered a white fertilizer, all at the same time. It seemed wonderful to the little girl that a machine could do all those things. She thought that her father looked large and important, sitting up on the drill, guiding the horses and turning them around at the end of the furrow. When he came to the end toward her, he said, 'Hello, Susie!'

'Hello, Pop-pa!' she answered, waving her hand.

'There'll be lots of beets,' said her father, smiling under his light-colored mustache. He was paid at so much an acre for taking care of the beets: the more acres, the more money. But the more acres, the more work, too. Both Susie and her mother would have to help with the thinning and weeding. Susie felt her back aching at the thought of the endless rows of

growing beets, under the broiling sun of June and July. She could hardly bear to think about the hard part of the beet season. With one more wave of her hand to her father, she turned away, thinking that she would get her kitten and take him to visit his brothers and sisters. She hoped that she could slip into the house without her mother's seeing her. If her mother caught sight of her, there would be some work for her to do at home.

Her mother was out in the garden, behind the house, with a cloth tied over her head. She was stooping over the freshly spaded earth. Susie went quietly in at the front door; snatched the kitten from his warm box, where he was curled up into a black ball; and ran back through the house and down the lane, as fast as she could go. She felt ashamed of sneaking away like that; but she did so want to see the cats in the barn — and she did want to catch a glimpse of the two Bolton girls, Beatrice and Eleanor.

She made her way around past the rhubarb clump and the tool-shed and the milk-house, to the open door of the barn. This time she had to call the mother cat and then follow the sound of her *Prr-rr*, until she found the little furry family in a cozy nest in the hay. She left her own kitten with his relatives, and went to stand at the barn door and look at the Big House.

Just as she had hoped, one of the girls was coming out of the side door. She was eating something.

When she saw Susie, she called out, 'Hoo-hoo!' in a friendly voice.

'Hoo-hoo!' Susie's heart was beating fast.

Beatrice, the older girl, was beckoning and calling to her, 'Come on over here.'

Susie walked timidly forward. Perhaps the girl would not like to have her prowling around the barn alone.

'How-do, Susie?' Beatrice was finishing a doughnut as she spoke.

'How-do! I was just letting my kitty visit its mother,' said Susie.

'Oh, yes. How is the kitty?' asked Beatrice.

'Just splendid. It's so sweet ——' Susie did not know how to tell how fine the kitty was.

'What are you going to call it?' inquired Beatrice.

Susie looked blank. Names meant very little to her. 'I — I thought I might call it Tiny,' she stammered.

'Humph! It won't always be little, you know,' said the other girl.

'N-no.' Susie had not thought of that. 'I — might call it Blackie,' she suggested hopefully.

'But it isn't all black. You can't call it Black-and-Whitey.'

Susie dug her toe into the ground. She didn't know whether Beatrice was trying to tease her, or not.

'What would you call it?' she asked desperately.

'I think Topaz is a good name,' said Beatrice, 'because cats like that always have yellow eyes.'

Susie was puzzled. She had never heard the word 'topaz,' and the name sounded silly to her.

'Or Ebony, or Timbuctoo.'

Susie looked so worried that Beatrice laughed. 'Come into the house,' she said. 'You haven't been in yet.' Susie hung back a little. Going into the Big House seemed like a bold thing. 'Come on,' said Beatrice again. 'Martha is making doughnuts, and there'll be a nice hot one for you.'

Susie slowly climbed the steps to the porch, and followed Beatrice into the house. They went into a large bright-looking kitchen. At first Susie did not dare to look around. There was a pleasant scent of frying doughnuts, with a faint odor of nutmeg around them. At a big range along one side of the room stood a plump middle-aged woman with her sleeves rolled up. She was taking the brown doughnuts out of the kettle with a long-handled skimmer.

'Oh, Martha, may I have two?' asked Beatrice — 'one for myself and one for Susie?'

Martha nodded and held out the pan into which she had piled the doughnuts. Beatrice handed one to Susie, who said 'Thanks,' in a low voice, and set her teeth into the warm delicious cake. How good it was! Susie looked about shyly as she ate. There were glass cupboards on one wall, with a great many dishes in them; and there were large work-tables with white

tops. There were white ruffled curtains at the windows. 'It's nice,' she said to herself.

'Where's Eleanor?' Beatrice was asking.

'Upstairs, I think,' answered Martha.

'Come on,' said Beatrice, eating her second doughnut. She drew Susie with her, through a dining-room where a white cloth was stretched on a long table. In the middle of the table was a vase with yellow forsythia blossoms in it. Susie was surprised to see that the family did not eat in the kitchen. Now Beatrice was leading her into a sitting-room where there were rugs and chairs and a great many books in cases around the room. A wood-fire was burning in a brick fireplace. Susie had a hurried glimpse of the furniture and mirrors and books, and then Beatrice guided her out into a hall.

'Hoo-hoo, El!' cried the older girl.

'What?' came a voice from upstairs.

'Here's Susie.' Beatrice turned to her guest. 'What *is* your last name?'

'Siegefried,' whispered Susie, feeling out of place, but glad that she could see the Big House.

'Susie Siggy-freed,' called Beatrice.

'All right,' came from above.

Susie followed Beatrice up the stairs and down a long carpeted hall.

'This is my room,' said Beatrice.

Susie stood staring. 'Such a *nice room!*' she thought. There were white ruffled curtains at the

windows, and the bed was all in white. The little German girl could not have told what else was in the room; for things seemed so new and confused to her. There was some sort of flowered cloth hanging on each side of the windows, and all around the room there were books and pictures and flowers. A new understanding came to Susie as she stood looking about her. No wonder the girls had not thought that her room was nice. In contrast to a room like this, Susie's seemed ugly and bare.

Eleanor came in, dressed in a gray wool-jersey dress, with a knotted blue tie. Her gray eyes were a little darker than her dress. Her light brown hair was fluffy and shining.

'Hello, Susie,' she said. 'How are you?'

'I'm all right,' said Susie, wishing that she could speak in the soft, pleasant way which seemed so easy to Eleanor.

'How do you get along at school?'

'All right,' returned Susie. She did not want to tell about the boys who made fun of her.

'Is Allie Sykes good to you?'

'M-m-h.' Susie nodded, her braided pigtails flapping. She wished she might walk around and look at everything.

'This is my room.' Eleanor showed a smaller room opening off Beatrice's. Peeping in, Susie saw a pink bedspread with roses on it, a small desk, a low table, and a low white willow chair; she hardly knew what

else, except that she caught a glimpse of more books and flowers.

'It's lovely.' She spoke in a husky voice. 'It's awful nice. I never saw such nice rooms.'

Beatrice laughed. 'They aren't anything grand, but we like 'em,' she said. 'Would you like to take a book or two home?'

'Oh! You wouldn't let me!'

'Yes, we would. Take one of these, if you want to.' Beatrice turned to a bookcase and took out a large attractive-looking book with a colored cover. 'Here's something you might like,' she said. 'It's easy to read and nice large print. Do you think you'd like it? I'll show you some of the pictures.' She turned over the leaves, while Susie stood breathlessly looking on, conscious of her greasy fingers.

'I'd like it,' said Susie, not lifting her eyes from the pages. 'I'll be awful careful of it.' Inside, she was wild with delight. 'My Mom'll put a paper around it, and I'll keep my hands clean.'

'I know you will,' said Beatrice; 'and I know your mother keeps the house clean.'

Susie was proud to hear the Bolton girl speak in this way. 'I wouldn't spoil it for anything,' she said. 'I'll keep it in my room.' Then she blushed, because she thought how different her room was from these two pretty rooms which belonged to Beatrice and Eleanor. She put the book under her arm and hugged it to her.

'Come to the window,' said Eleanor. 'I want to show you something.'

Susie crossed the threshold and went to one of the windows in Eleanor's room.

'See,' said the friendly girl. 'Over there's a hill that's called Lone Pine Hill. Do you see that there's only one big tree on it, standing right up against the sky?'

'Oh, yes, I see. It's an awful long way off,' cried Susie. 'It's nice to see it.'

'This is the only place in the house where we can get a glimpse of it,' Eleanor told her. 'Everywhere else the trees or the barns or the hills shut it out. I call my room the Lone Pine Room,' she said laughingly.

It seemed wonderful to Susie that anybody should have a name for a room. 'What's the other girl's?' she asked. She did not want Eleanor to have anything that was better than what Beatrice had.

'Hers is the White Wisteria Room,' answered Eleanor; 'because a white wisteria hangs its flowers right outside her window. 'You'll see it when it's in blossom.'

Susie did not know what a wisteria was, and she did not dare to ask. To her mind, the Lone Pine Room had the nicer name. She thought about her mother again. 'I guess I got to go,' she said suddenly. 'I left my kitten in the barn.'

'You don't have to hurry,' said Eleanor. 'But if you want to go, I'll go down with you.'

'I guess I better go,' answered Susie. She was afraid her mother might be rather cross by this time.

'Good-bye,' said Beatrice. 'You may have another book when you like.'

Eleanor led the way through the hall and down the stairs and through the sitting-room and the dining-room and the kitchen. Martha was getting supper, and there were interesting smells of cooking food. Eleanor went with Susie to the barn, where the kitten was still curled up in the hay with his mother. Susie snuggled him up close against her dress, holding her book with her elbow.

'Can you manage?' asked Eleanor.

'I guess so. I don't want to drop the book,' Susie replied.

'I'll carry it to the bridge.'

The two girls walked along, petting the kitten and saying how much they loved cats. At the bridge Eleanor tucked the book under Susie's arm again, with a cheery 'Good-bye' and a kiss on the kitten's furry black pate.

Susie ran on alone, excited over her adventure in being asked into the Big House. Her little home seemed small and poor beside what she had seen. Then a thought came to Susie. It was a big thought, but she did not know that. 'I'm glad that *somebody* has such a nice house and such nice things,' she said to herself. She was happy in thinking about the house. She had liked seeing it. She wished that she might go

in and walk around it, all alone, and look at all the things, one by one.

But now, as she came near the Little House, she felt guilty and scared. She had rushed away without letting her mother know where she was going. Karl was sitting on the front doorstep, eating bread and butter. Karl often could not wait for supper. Susie went in at the kitchen door. Her mother was holding the baby and trying to stir something on the stove.

'Well, Susie, where have you been?' she said impatiently as the little girl came into the room. 'What you mean, running off like that, without telling me?'

'I — I been in the Big House,' panted Susie, her eyes shining with the thought of what she had seen.

'So?' Her mother stood with a spoon in her hand. Baby Bertha laughed and gurgled, looking at Susie.

'I took my kitten up to see its mother ——'

'So foolish. It can stay here.'

'And the girl — Beah-triss, I guess her name is — she asked me to go in. And they gave me a doughnut — a hot one, Mom, just out of the kettle. And I saw their rooms; they each have one. Oh, they're just grand!'

'So?' Mrs. Siegefried did not scold any more. She began to look pleased. 'They took you into the house, eh? Well, that's good,' she said. She liked to have her girl go with Mr. Bolton's girls. 'Now you hold *die Kleine* while I get supper.'

Susie was relieved because her mother had not been

angry. She put her kitten into his box, and laid her book on the table in the front room, and took the baby in her arms. 'Nice Bertha!' She kissed the baby behind the ear, where there was a soft fuzzy place. ('You mustn't kiss babies on their faces,' Susie's teacher in the city had said.)

Susie kept thinking of the Big House and the good furniture and pretty things in it; and of the Bolton girls and the happy time they must have.

'Mom,' she said at last, 'why don't Pop have a big farm and a nice house?'

Mrs. Siegefried stopped her work and stared. 'Why, I don't know ——' she said slowly.

'Why couldn't he have 'em, as well as Mr. Bolton?' persisted Susie.

'I don't know,' her mother answered. 'He just don't. Some folks don't get ahead like other folks.'

'Why?' asked Susie again.

'I don't know. They just don't. Everybody has to do different things. Some folks have the big farms to raise beets and other things on, and some folks go around and take care of the beets. That's all I know.'

Susie did not feel satisfied, but she did not ask any more questions. She thought about Beatrice and Eleanor a good deal.

At the same time that Susie was holding the baby and asking questions, Beatrice and Eleanor were standing at the window in the Lone Pine Room.

'I think we ought to do something for Susie,' said Beatrice. 'She's a nice little girl. Her folks are nicer and cleaner than most of the sugarbeet people — nicer than any we've had before; Papa says so.'

'Well, what can we do for her?' said Eleanor. 'I can give her that blue dress-and-bloomer suit of mine, if Mother'll let me. It's too small for me, and it would just fit her, I think.'

'She'd look nice in it,' said Beatrice. 'It's too bad that she has to go around in those funny dresses. Maybe on Saturday we can get her dressed up in it.'

'Maybe we can.'

'Oh, El!' Beatrice squeezed her sister's arm. 'Why can't we have a shower for Susie?'

'A shower?' echoed Eleanor.

'Yes. You know when Cousin Edith was married, all her friends gave her a shower. And when Emma Holtoff was going to be married ——'

Eleanor laughed. 'Susie isn't going to be married yet, I hope,' she said. 'But I think a shower would be fine. We could give her some clothes and something for her room ——'

'Yes, and invite some of the girls at school to come out to a party and bring things ——' broke in Beatrice. 'We'll ask Mother.'

'Come on. Let's ask her.' Eleanor pulled at her sister's dress.

They dashed through the bedrooms and down the

hall to their mother's room. And at the same time, Susie was sitting in the kitchen at the Little House, holding the baby, and thinking about Beatrice and Eleanor and their happy, easy life in the Big House.

CHAPTER VI

THE SHOWER

SUSIE went to school during the rest of the week, neither very happy nor very unhappy. She liked to hear the teacher read from a story book, and she liked to study her lessons. Allie Sykes was good to her; and the big girl, Charlotte Nelson, always said, 'Hello,' and walked through the woods with her and Karl. The boys still shouted 'Susie Sugarbeet' at her; and some of the girls said, 'Why don't you have your hair bobbed?' and, 'Why do you have your dress so long?' But no one was really 'mean' to her, or made her cry.

Two other sugarbeet children had entered school, from a farm near the schoolhouse. They were little Russian boys, seven and nine years old. Many of the sugarbeet people were Russians. They did not send their children to school, if they could help it, because the term was nearly over, and it did not seem worth while, and they wanted the children to stay at home and work.

Every day Susie read a little in the book which the Bolton girls had lent her. She could not read much at a time, because she had other things to do. It was surprising how busy a little girl of nine could be in the morning, at noon, and at night, even up to bedtime.

On Saturday, something strange and beautiful hap-

pened. It was a warm day. May had begun, and the weather was of the sort which one expects in the spring. Susie had helped her mother all the morning; and she had planned that after dinner she and Karl would 'go in wading,' in the shallow parts of the brook. There were places where the water rippled over smooth pebbles and white sand; and there were other places (to be kept away from) where the water eddied in dark holes near the shore, under the shadowy hanging alder bushes. Susie was learning to love the little stream with its quiet but constant murmur and singing.

The dishes had just been washed and put away, when Susie spied the two girls from the Big House coming along the lane. Eleanor had a paper parcel in her hand. The girls called to Susie, and then came up to the door.

'We want to see your mother,' said Beatrice. 'Is she at home?'

'Of course.' Mother was always at home.

Eleanor went into the kitchen, while Beatrice and Susie stayed outside. Susie could hear Eleanor talking in a low voice to Mrs. Siegefried, who was saying, '*Ja, ja!* Yes, yes, yes,' in an eager and friendly tone.

Eleanor came back to the doorstep. 'We brought a little present for you, Susie,' she said. 'Your mother says it's all right for you to have it.'

Susie stood without a word. What could they have brought her? Eleanor was untying the parcel, and a

bit of blue cloth was showing. She brought out a dress and a pair of bloomers of the same goods — beautiful smooth blue material, like silk (only it wasn't silk). Susie gaped and stared.

'It's a suit that's too small for me,' Eleanor was saying. 'We thought it would be just right for you. Do you like it?'

Susie could not find a word at first. She could only look from one to the other of the girls and make a kind of gasping noise in her throat.

'Oh, yes, yes! I like it awfully,' she said at last. 'I don't feel as if it was really for me!' It did not seem possible that she could have a dress that looked like other girls' dresses.

'Yes, it is. Come inside and put it on,' said Beatrice.

The three girls stepped into the kitchen, where Mrs. Siegefried stood smiling. 'You go into the front room, and put the things on,' she said to Susie. 'I'll help you.'

All in a flutter, her hands awkward with pleasure, Susie pulled off her blue gingham frock, and wriggled into the new garments. They fitted her perfectly. The little dress, becomingly short, fastened on the shoulder, and hung in smooth straight lines broken only by a narrow sash which tied jauntily behind. Susie caught sight of herself in the mirror which was hung so that it tilted forward on the wall. 'Oh! oh!' she cried. She did not look at all like herself — little

SHE WANTED TO DANCE UP AND DOWN. SHE WAS GOING TO LOOK LIKE OTHER GIRLS

German Susie. She seemed a great deal better-looking than she had ever imagined.

She ran out to where the girls were standing.

'How lovely you look!' cried Beatrice.

'It fits you just splendidly,' said Eleanor. 'I'm so glad that you can wear it, and that it looks so stylish on you.'

'*Ach*, you're like all the girls, now,' cried Mrs. Siegefried. Strangely enough, she was as pleased as Susie.

Eleanor had unrolled another parcel. 'Here are some short stockings,' she said. 'We wear this sort in the summer; and here are some brown shoes that aren't just right for me. Won't you take these, too?'

Susie could hardly believe that she was going to be so well fitted out. She took off her clumsy black shoes and slipped her feet into the well-made brown ones, with straps and buttons. She wanted to dance up and down. She was going to look like other girls — nicer than most of those who came to school! It was wonderful to change from an odd little figure to a well-dressed girl, just as one had dreamed of doing. How happy one could be in pretty clothes!

'We're having a kind of party this afternoon,' said Beatrice. 'Some girls are coming from town — some of the girls who go to school with us. We want you to come.'

'Oh!' said Susie, looking frightened.

'You needn't be shy of them. 'They're all nice

girls,' put in Eleanor, 'and they're nothing to be scared of. You'll come, won't you?'

Susie nodded. 'She'd like to,' said her mother.

'Three o'clock,' said Eleanor, turning to go.

'Three o'clock,' echoed Susie. 'Oh — thank you for the dress, and — and ——'

'It's all right. You come to our party,' smiled Beatrice.

Both girls ran away toward home, without waiting for any more thanks.

'You're going to a party!' said Mrs. Siegefried, her broad face beaming. 'That's nice for you, Susie.'

'I'm kind o' scared to go,' whimpered Susie, forgetting her new clothes. 'What do they do at a party?'

'Just play, I guess. You'll be fine, I know,' said her mother.

'Dast I go?'

'Of course. You got a nice dress to wear. Why shouldn't you go?' said Mrs. Siegefried. 'You come in the house and get cleaned up.'

Susie was always clean, but she had to submit to being scrubbed, combed, and redressed. She kept looking at herself in the glass and smoothing down her pretty blue frock.

'You look as good as any mother's girl,' said her mother happily.

At three o'clock, Susie started for the Big House. The nearer she came to it, the more slowly she

walked. She felt as if she must turn around and run home. How hard it would be for her to face a crowd of strange girls from the city!

Eleanor, it seemed, was watching for her. 'Oh, there you are, Susie!' she said, coming around the corner of the house. Susie came slowly forward, shrinking from the ordeal before her. She heard the calls and shouts of the other girls, and then she could see them running and playing on the lawn. There were seven or eight of them.

'Just come along with me,' said Eleanor, 'and start playing with the rest.'

The others glanced at her and went on with their game of tag. Susie stood back against the porch, feeling shy and bewildered. Then all at once she found herself dragged into a line of girls playing crack-the-whip.

'I look just like the rest,' she thought as she bounced along. The others looked at her kindly and treated her as if she were one of their own group. She did not know their names, and she could hardly tell them apart, except by their clothes, which were much alike, and yet all different and all attractive. Once in a while Beatrice or Eleanor would say, 'Sally, this is Susie,' or, 'Marjorie, you know Susie, don't you?' And then the girls would nod at Susie and say, 'How do you do?' and the games would go on.

At last they all went into the house. In the sitting-room, a big cloth with the picture of a donkey printed

on it was tacked up against a closed door. The donkey had no tail; but lying on the table was a cloth tail. Mrs. Bolton announced that the girl who could make the best effort, blindfolded, at pinning on the donkey's tail was to have a prize. Susie had never heard of such a queer game, but the other girls seemed to have known about it before. It was great fun, but a trifle scary, to have one's eyes blinded with a handkerchief, and then go blundering about, trying to pin the cloth tail where it belonged. There were shrieks of laughter when some of the girls pinned the tail on the ear or the nose of the donkey. Susie was proud and nervous when her chance came. She went forward cautiously, anxious not to go too far toward one side or the other. She fumbled unsteadily at the pin, and then breathlessly fixed the tail in the place which seemed best. She heard the girls give a long 'Oo-oo' of satisfaction. For a wild moment she thought, 'I'm going to get the prize.' When the handkerchief was taken from her eyes, she saw that she had done well — so well that she might perhaps expect the prize. But Doris, the next girl, did better, and the prize went to her. It was a glass jar of white toffee candy, such as Susie had never seen before. How Karl would have liked it, she thought. The girls were saying, 'You did well, Susie,' and that was happiness enough, without the candy.

When the laughing and talking about the donkey had died down, a kind of expectant hush came over

the group of girls. The clock struck four. The middle-aged woman named Martha threw open the double doors into the dining-room, and there was a table set out for refreshments. It seemed a wonderful sight to Susie. The dark brownish-red table had no cloth on it, but at each place were squares of yellow linen. In the middle of the table were some sprays of yellow flowers in a glass vase.

All the girls trooped in and sat down. Susie was almost overcome with shyness and pleasure, too. She was afraid that she might not do everything properly; but she was glad to sit at the pretty table and eat the good food. There was a delicious pudding with orange quarters in it; and there were little wafers and plain white cake with yellow icing. Susie watched the other girls. Everything was easy, it seemed. All you had to do was to use your spoon, and break off your cake with your fingers, and drink your lemonade without making any noise. After the pudding was finished, yellow and white candies were passed. Susie was so afraid of seeming greedy that she did not take as many as she wanted.

Mrs. Bolton did not sit down with the girls, but she stood near the table, watching to see that everybody was served. She was a smiling, pretty woman, who looked young and lively. After the refreshments had disappeared, the girls went into the sitting-room again, all laughing and talking together. Then, all at once, they were running upstairs to the Lone Pine

Room, to get their hats and wraps. Two or three cars had arrived to take them home. Susie let herself be swung along by the rush of the other girls, though she had no wraps with her.

In the Lone Pine Room she lingered while the others put on their hats and coats, and trooped off down the stairs. Each one spoke to her in passing. 'Good-bye, Susie! Good luck, Susie,' they called cheerily, with smiles.

'Good-bye! good-bye!' answered Susie, wondering why they were so kind to her. Her blue eyes were shining with joy. She had had a happy time, and best of all (except for her pigtails) she had looked like the other girls, and had known that she was prettily dressed. She was rather puzzled to notice that each girl left a parcel on the table in Eleanor's room. It was strange, too, that Eleanor did not go downstairs with the girls, but merely said good-bye to them, and stayed in the room with Susie. There was a sound of chattering and laughing and merry good-byes, and the front door closing.

Eleanor could hardly wait to tell her the news. 'The girls brought something for you, Susie,' she said, putting her hand on the pile of parcels.

'For *me!*' Susie turned red and then looked scared. Could it be that Eleanor was teasing her? She gazed timidly at the packages on the table.

'Yes, for you,' Eleanor was going on. 'It's a shower, Susie — a shower!'

'Shower, shower!' cried Beatrice, coming back into the room. 'Ho, ho, Susie! A shower!'

Susie did not know what to make of such strange talk. The weather was bright and clear. There was no sign of a storm. 'I don't know what you mean,' she stammered. 'These things aren't for me, are they?'

'Yes, yes. For you.' The girls were growing impatient to see the parcels opened. 'Let's see what's in them.'

'Why — why should they give anything to me?' asked Susie, not really daring to unwrap the pretty green and lavender papers.

'They wanted to,' said Beatrice gently. 'Now, let's see what's there.'

She handed a flat parcel to Susie, who wonderingly untied the red cord around it, and shook out some pieces of soft white cloth with ruffles. 'What is it?' she asked, her hands moving unsteadily over the cloth and the paper.

Her face was so puzzled that Beatrice and Eleanor began to laugh.

'Why, it's curtains, Susie,' explained Eleanor. 'Curtains for your room. Doris brought them. She wanted you to have a pretty room.'

Susie could only stare. Now she could have some white curtains at her windows. She had supposed that she would always have to go without them. Before she could think of anything to say, Beatrice had

laid the curtains aside, and put another parcel into her hands. This contained a dress with bloomers. And they were of silk, real silk — *pongee*, Beatrice called them.

'They were too small for Isabel,' Eleanor was explaining. 'She wanted you to have them.'

Then came a white cotton underslip with narrow lace on it; and a fine pink gingham dress — such a lovely color. Susie held it up against herself. 'Oh! oh!' was all that she could say, but her cheeks were pinker than the dress.

'It's a little too long,' said Eleanor critically. 'But it can easily be shortened.'

'Oh, yes!' said Susie. She wanted her dress to be short, up to her knees, as the other girls' dresses were. 'But what did they do that for?'

'Because they wanted to,' answered Eleanor. 'Here's something else.' She held up a cape in a dull-blue color, like a misty day. A pretty white straw hat went with it. Susie had not thought of having a summer hat. She went bareheaded most of the time.

Now came a large bundle, much bigger than a dress or two would make. Another queer thing came to light — as puzzling as the curtains had been.

'What is it?' gasped Susie, as the cord and paper came off.

'A bedspread.'

How Susie did stare! 'For my bed?' she asked, hardly believing her eyes.

'Yes. Milly brought it. Her mother gave up her house, and they stay at a hotel, or boarding-house, and they don't need things like this.'

'Oh! Oh!' said Susie. Then a book popped out of a brightly figured wrapping paper — 'a real book, with pictures in it,' as Susie said. And it appeared that the girl who had won the donkey-tail prize had left the candy for Susie. 'So many things can't be mine,' said the little girl, holding the book under her arm, and reaching out to touch the pink gingham dress.

'They are, though,' said Eleanor. 'The girls have so much. They want you to have some of their things. They want you to have a nice room and nice clothes.'

'They're awful good,' sighed Susie, keeping her eyes on the heap of precious gifts. Suddenly she said, 'I must go home.' It had just dawned on her that she was the only one left of the whole party.

'We'll go with you,' said Beatrice, 'and help you carry the things.'

Susie was so excited that she hardly knew what was going on. She gathered some of the gifts into her arms, and dropped some on the floor. Beatrice and Eleanor laughingly picked up those which Susie had left, and followed her through the hall and down the stairs. At the foot of the stairs stood the girls' mother with a good-sized package in her hands.

'I want to give something for the shower, too,' she said.

'Oh-h! thank you,' said Susie, looking up into the friendly smiling face of the woman.

'It's a rug,' said Beatrice, 'for your room.'

Susie could only gasp. She tried to huddle her armful to her, and take hold of the rug, but Beatrice tucked it under her own arm.

'We're helping her take her things home,' she said. 'We'll be back after a while.'

'Very well,' answered her mother.

Susie could hardly understand how all this good fortune had come to her; but she was bursting with pride at the thought of showing her mother how kind the strange girls had been.

How Mrs. Siegefried and Karl stared when the three girls came rushing in with their arms full!

'Just look, Mom! See! All the lovely dresses I got — and a book, and some curtains.' Susie was almost breathless with her eagerness to show off her gifts.

Mrs. Siegefried was all amazement. 'Where did those things come from?' she asked.

'The girls made a shower for her,' Eleanor was explaining, her gray eyes full of happiness. 'It was Susie's party — a shower.'

'They brought things for her?' asked Mrs. Siegefried, in astonishment.

'Yes.'

Susie held up the pongee silk suit. 'Look how lovely!' she said. 'Mom, I can be just like other folks now.'

'They must be awful nice girls,' said Mrs. Siegefried.

'They're all right,' answered Beatrice. 'May we help her fix up her room?'

'Why, yes, sure,' Mrs. Siegefried replied. 'She'd like that. Susie likes her room.'

Karl, with his finger in his mouth, had stood looking and listening. He followed the girls upstairs and peeped at them from the door of his own room.

First, the curtains went up. They were of soft material which did not wrinkle much. There were ruffled tie-backs to hold them in place, so that they were looped up in just the same way as the curtains in the Lone Pine Room. The low sun shone through them with a pinkish glow.

Beatrice spread the pretty striped rag rug in front of the bed, and Eleanor unfolded the big white bedspread and pulled it smoothly into place over the gray blanket. She stretched it up over the pillows and tucked it under them so that they were covered, and yet you could see that they were there. Susie stood looking on, saying nothing, because she was so glad. A cover for the washstand appeared among the things, though Susie had not seen it before. It was like a towel with fringe at both ends.

'Susie really needs a table,' said Beatrice, looking around. 'The book will have to go on the dresser.'

'Maybe Mother can find one for her,' said Eleanor hopefully.

'Maybe.'

'It's nice that she has such a pretty dresser-scarf with lace on it,' said Beatrice. Susie felt proud to hear that. She wanted to look and look at the curtains and the bedspread and the rug.

'Oh, she ought to have some flowers on the dresser — a few apple blossoms or something,' cried Eleanor.

She and Susie tore downstairs. 'Can I have a glass or something, Mom?' begged Susie, 'I want it to put some flowers in.'

'You got to have flowers?' answered Mrs. Siegefried.

'Uh-huh,' Susie panted. It seemed as if she could not wait. 'I got to have some on my dresser.'

'Well, here's a jelly-glass.' Her mother handed the glass from the shelf.

Susie and Eleanor hurried out of the house, and picked a few pink sprays of apple blossoms. Then they ran in and placed the sprays in the jelly-glass, which had been filled with water.

'Oh, how nice it looks!' cried Susie.

She stumbled upstairs with it in her hand, spilling a little of the water in her haste. Karl peered at her with round puzzled eyes. The girls all stood off and admired the effect of the flowers reflected in the glass.

'Now I'm going to hang your dresses and the cape and things in the closet,' said Beatrice in her practical way. 'They may need pressing, but we'll hang 'em there, anyway. I brought some hangers.' The pretty

clothes went into the closet. 'I'll leave the door half-open, so that you can see 'em,' Beatrice added, as she hung up the white straw hat. 'There! you're as neat as a pin here, and doesn't it look splendid?'

'Oh, it does!' exclaimed Susie. 'Mom! Karl! Come an' look.' Mrs. Siegefried and Karl stood in the door of the room, silently examining the rug, the curtains, the bedspread, the well-filled clothes closet under the eaves.

'Nice,' commented Karl, who never had much to say.

'Pretty fine,' said Mrs. Siegefried, her face beaming with satisfaction. 'You're good girls.'

'We're going home, now,' announced Eleanor.

'Thank you, thank you, thank you, for the party and all the things,' cried Susie, her gratitude overcoming her shyness.

'It's all right. You're welcome to what we've done,' laughed Beatrice, putting up her hands to brush aside her thick brown hair, in an embarrassed way. 'It was mostly the other girls, you know.' She and Eleanor hurried away before Susie could utter any more thanks.

'Aren't they good?' said Susie. 'See, now, Momma, I can be like other girls.'

'Well, it's good,' answered her mother, stepping heavily down the stairs. 'I didn't think it made such a difference — about your room and your dresses, you know.'

'It *does* make a difference,' cried Susie with tears in her eyes. 'I *want* to be like other girls. I want my room to be like other girls' rooms.'

'You have it the way you want it now, my Susie,' said her mother, going back to her cooking. 'I didn't understand, I guess.'

'I got it the way I want it, all except my hair,' returned Susie. 'Girls don't wear their hair in braids, all tied up tight.'

Mrs. Siegefried dashed some pepper into her soup, and then stood a minute with the pepper-box in her hand. '*Ach*, I suppose you must ——' she said slowly.

'Oo-oo! Dast I? Dast I, now?' Susie was jumping with joy. 'The Martha-woman said she'd cut it.'

'I can do it myself, well enough,' said her mother. 'You wait. To-night, after you have your bath, I'll cut it.'

'Oh, Mom! I'll be awful glad.' Susie went around for the next few hours in a sort of dream. Every few minutes she was running upstairs to look at her new curtains and bedspread, or glance into her book, or try on the blue cape.

'You act like a wild girl,' said her mother; but she was smiling as she spoke.

Her father heard the story of the shower without saying a great deal. He was not much of a talker, and he did not always seem interested in Susie's affairs.

Sometimes Susie told him things and he didn't seem to hear or remember.

'It's good you got such nice presents,' was all he said when Susie told him about the party and what the girls had brought. Because she pulled at his sleeve, he had to go up and look at her room.

'Isn't it lovely, Pop-pa?' asked the little girl breathlessly.

'Yeah. It's nice, all right,' said Herman. 'It's fine.'

'Wasn't it splendid of the girls?'

'Yeah. Pretty good. I guess we came to a good place,' her father replied.

'We didn't *ever* come to such a good place before,' sighed Susie. 'I wish we could stay here always.'

The wonderful thing which made her happiness complete was having her hair cut. Her father was out at the store; Karl and Baby Bertha were in bed; the kitten snoozed in his box behind the stove. Susie sat in a kitchen chair, with a towel around her shoulders. Her mother, in the lamplight, with the big scissors in her hand, stood over her.

'*Ach*, I hate to schnip it off,' said Anna Siegefried, almost crying. 'I don't know when it will ever grow again.'

'I don't want it to grow. Oh, Mom, cut it off, cut it off,' groaned Susie, dreadfully afraid that her mother would change her mind.

'I will, then.' The scissors felt cold against the

little girl's neck. *Snip, snip!* The soft flaxen hair fell on the paper spread along the floor. 'It hurts me,' muttered Mrs. Siegefried; but she kept on. Susie sat trembling lest her mother should stop with the pig-tails only half removed. 'There! *Es ist gethan!*' cried her mother.

Susie jumped down, shaking herself. She was in her outing flannel nightgown, with a little checked shawl pinned around her shoulders. She ran to look in the glass. 'Oh, it looks so nice! Oh, I'm so glad, Mom-ma,' she cried. She threw her arms around her mother's neck and kissed her.

'*Na, na!* You go to bed,' said Mrs. Siegefried, half crying. 'You don't look like my Susie.'

'I look a lot better.' Susie ran to the glass again. She felt bare and queer, but so happy that she could have capered up the stairs if she had not been so tired with a long day's adventures. With the kitten in her arms, she climbed the stairs slowly, and fell asleep thinking of Beatrice and Eleanor and the Lone Pine Room.

CHAPTER VII

BEETS AND MORE BEETS

Susie wore her new clothes to school every day. 'Don't be afraid to wear 'em,' Beatrice had urged, 'because that's what they're for, and school doesn't last so very long, anyhow.'

At first, Susie felt as if every one were looking at her. 'Oo-oo! How nice you look,' the girls had said. Even the teacher had smiled approvingly.

'They're such *nice* dresses,' said Charlotte Nelson, who was old enough to know how good the materials were, and how well the frocks were made. 'And isn't it splendid that your mother let you have your hair cut?'

'She didn't want to,' sighed Susie. 'But she said that she s'posed she just had to.'

Now the beets were coming up. In the black fields, the sprouting leaves made long green-and-red rows, stretching on and on into nothing.

'They're coming up pretty well,' said Herman. 'Soon they'll have to be blocked.'

It seemed only a few days afterward that he began blocking with the wide hoe, which was like an ordinary hoe, with more 'spread' to it. Susie had to stay out of school three days while her mother helped with the hoeing. It seemed as if she could not bear to give

up those three days of wearing good clothes and hearing the teacher read stories aloud. She did not care so very much about the rest of the school. Still, she liked Allie Sykes. They exchanged lunches at rēē'cess, and walked around with their arms over each other's shoulders.

Those three days were cloudy and gray; and Susie was glad to stay indoors, in her old blue dress, and take care of Bertha, and wash the dishes, and boil the potatoes and turnips, and set the table. Susie could not do the hoeing, because the hoe was big and clumsy for her; but she expected to help with the weeding and thinning. Her little hands were quick at that sort of work. She had helped in the beet fields the year before; and now she was older, and more would be expected of her. She tried not to think how hard it would be. She was almost sorry to see the way in which the beet plants popped out of the ground and rose as if by magic, when a few warm rainy nights came on.

She was glad to get back to school. All the talk there, she found, was about the picnic which was to be held on the 'last day.' Each child was to bring some good things to eat, and then at noon there would be a picnic under the trees, and then there would be singing and speaking.

'What can you and Karl bring?' asked the teacher.

'A-a cake!' said Susie rashly.

'Are you sure?' asked the teacher, holding her

pencil above the sheet of paper on which she was making a list of promises.

'Yes, ma'am,' asserted Susie. 'My mom-ma makes good cake.'

'Well, you ask her.' The teacher wrote down Susie's name with 'cake' opposite, and a tiny question mark.

At home Susie put her question hurriedly to her mother. 'Mom,' she cried, rushing in, with her cheeks red and her eyes shining, 'you will make us a cake for the picnic, won't you?'

'For what picnic?'

Susie explained, her words tumbling over each other. 'You will, won't you?' she repeated at the last.

'I guess I can,' answered Mrs. Siegefried. 'What kind of a cake?'

'Oh, any kind — a good kind,' said Susie. She had not thought about anything but just *a cake*.

'Well — we'll see,' said Mrs. Siegefried, dishing up the dinner.

'But I've got to tell her for sure,' wailed Susie. 'Dastn't I tell her yes, for sure?'

'All right. Tell her yes.' Mrs. Siegefried looked over her shoulder to see Susie's face light up with joy.

Back at school, Susie marched up to the teacher's desk. 'I can bring a cake,' she said.

'Very good.' The teacher erased her question mark.

The days went on quickly now. They sped by so

fast that in a wink it was almost time for the last day of school. And just at the wrong time the Field Man, who went around the country looking after the beet fields, came to look at the Bolton beets, and said that they would have to be thinned at once. The young beets had grown so fast that some of them had to be pulled out to make room for the others to grow; and of course the weeds had grown fast, too, and they had to be pulled up by the roots. When Susie's father came in to supper, he said as he washed his hands, 'Well, we got some job ahead of us. The Field Man says we got to begin to weed an' thin, right away.'

'When?' asked Susie wildly, with a choke in her voice.

'To-morrow morning.' Mr. Siegefried turned to reach down the towel.

'Oh!' Susie felt as if some one had struck her. The thinning and weeding would take a number of days. If the work began the next day, which was Thursday, it would go right on through Friday, Saturday, and Monday. She would have to stay at home and take care of the baby, so that her mother could work. If she had to stay at home on Friday, *she would miss the picnic, and the last day of school.*

She did not say anything to her father. He was sitting down at the table. Susie, trembling with anxiety, followed her mother into the pantry.

'Oh, Mom!' she said in a loud whisper, 'can't I go? Can't I go to the picnic?'

'We'll see. I guess you can. I hope you can,' answered her mother, with a frown on her usually smooth forehead. 'Let's keep still about it now, my Susie.'

Susie choked a sob, and crept out to the supper table. Karl was climbing into his chair. Her father was eating his soup. Susie felt as if she could never eat anything again; but there was hot gingerbread, which she loved to eat with brown syrup, and she managed to put away a fairly hearty meal. All the evening, she kept thinking about the beets, and wondering whether they would keep her away from the picnic. She could not bear it, she thought, if they did.

The next morning all the family, except Karl, were up early. Mr. and Mrs. Siegefried had their breakfast, and then prepared to go into the beet-field. Mrs. Siegefried put on heavy old laced shoes, a short skirt, a gray calico apron, and a shapeless old sweater. She tied a white cloth over her head. Susie, fondling her kitten, listened to what her mother told her about keeping the house and taking care of the baby. Karl was to have his breakfast and go to school with the Nelson children. Susie was to wash the dishes and dress the baby, and bring the little thing out to the field, when the house was in order. Susie dared not think about school. There was this one day before the picnic, and she could not think about to-morrow.

Her father and mother trudged off to the field in the beautiful bright sunshine. Susie, alone with her

black-and-white kitten, watched them out of sight beyond the plum trees. Then she turned back to the quiet house. While she was clearing the table, Karl came downstairs, his thick light hair standing up straight and towsled on his head, his big blue eyes heavy with sleep.

'I'm hungry,' he yawned. 'I want somesing *z'essen.*' Karl sometimes mixed his English and his German.

Susie hurried to get him his oatmeal and rye bread. 'You got to go for the milk this morning,' she said. 'I can't leave Bertha.'

'Aw-right.' Karl was sugaring his oatmeal.

'I guess they'll save it,' said Susie, 'even if you are kind o' late.'

After his breakfast, Karl started off for the milk; and Susie cleared the table and washed the dishes. She wiped the sink carefully, and washed out the dishcloth in clear water, as her mother had taught her. Karl came back with the milk (he had spilled a good deal), and had to be got ready for school. Susie intended to run out to the road with him and speak to Charlotte Nelson, but she heard the fretful cry of little Bertha, who had been awake and cooing in her mother's bedroom. Susie ran to take the baby out of the crib. The little thing smiled and wriggled, eager to be taken up. The elder sister lifted the fat baby — no small load — and carried her into the kitchen. Susie gave the child her warm milk, laughing at the

way in which the baby tried to get her tiny fingers around the bottle. It was fun to take off the canton flannel nightgown, and see the baby's fat pink arms and legs. Susie played 'Peek' and kissed the plump little face, as she put on the baby's faded blue chambray dress, which had been Karl's.

She tied the baby into an armchair, because there was no high chair. The house had been straightened up, and the table set for dinner, and the fire supplied with hard sticks which would burn a long time. The kitten had to be kissed and petted and fed a little more milk than he needed, even though Karl had wasted so much.

Now Susie knew that her father and mother would be wondering why she did not come out to the field. She put on the baby the little shabby gray coat and knitted cap, which had been Karl's or some other baby's. 'She looks sweet, anyway,' sighed Susie, wishing that Bertha could have prettier clothes. She wrapped the child in a small blanket, and took her in her arms. 'Good-bye, kitty,' she whispered. Then she started for the beet-field, to join her father and mother.

It was not easy, carrying the baby over the rough ground. She could see her father and mother on their knees in the dirt, thinning and weeding the young beet plants. Several times Susie had to put Bertha down on the ground (with the blanket under her), in order to rest and get breath for the next lap of the

journey. When she came to the edge of the field, she put Bertha down on the blanket, in the grass, taking care to turn the baby so that the sun should not shine in her eyes.

Her mother beckoned to her, and Susie ran down the rows of beets. Green and red leaves with their small rounded roots lay withering in the sun.

'We left the rows around the end, so's you could do 'em,' said her mother, never stopping the motion of her strong tanned hands. 'You can thin 'em out while Bertha's good. I left a sack for you. Be careful not to pull out too many.'

'Yeah, I will,' said Susie. She stood for just a moment, looking about. There flowed the stream, where it was so much fun to wade and hunt for shells and pebbles. There, under the roof of the little white house, was her room with a new book in it, which Eleanor had let her take. There was the Big House, the home of the two Bolton girls, who had such an easy time. *They* didn't have to stay out of school. Susie swallowed hard. She felt like crying.

'What you standing there for?' said her mother. 'Go look at Bertha. Don't let her put any grass or sticks in her mouth.'

Susie clumped back along the rows. She saw that a good many had been left for her. She propped the baby up with a tuft of grass and the blanket. A bush with thick young leaves shaded the child from the sun. Susie took the dirty gunny sack, spread it upon

IT WAS NOT EASY, CARRYING THE BABY OVER THE ROUGH GROUND

the ground, knelt upon it, and began fumbling among the red stems of the beets. There was a blur in front of her, and a few tears dripped down on the dark spreading leaves. The baby was 'good,' and lay cooing and staring at her own fingers.

Susie went down the rows, pulling out the plants where they grew too thickly, and throwing them aside. With quick motions, she rooted up the weeds which grew along the rows and tossed them away to wither. Her shoulders soon began to ache. She tried to work fast, so that her father would be satisfied, but her fingers grew clumsy, and her wrists hurt. Bertha began to fret, and Susie went to her and moved her into a more comfortable position. She gave her an empty spool on a string, to play with. Then she went back to the beets, hitching herself along on her gunny sack, and pulling the plants out of the soft cool soil. After half an hour of the work, she had to straighten herself and run around to ease her back and legs. Then Bertha had to be taken up and petted and soothed. Mr. and Mrs. Siegefried were working farther and farther away.

'Bye-bye, baby! bye-bye, baby!' sang Susie in a hoarse little monotone. But Bertha only fretted and whined. 'Maybe it's time for her bottle again,' thought Susie. She had no timepiece, and was not much good at guessing. She put the baby down again, but Bertha screamed and kicked. Susie dared not leave her, to go to the end of the field where her

mother was; and she did not want to carry the heavy child all that distance. She trotted the baby, and sang and coaxed, but she could not quiet the infant's loud screams. Mrs. Siegefried, far away in the field, paid no attention. The only thing for Susie to do was to carry the baby back to the house and care for her there. She caught up the blanket, wrapped it around the baby, and stumbled off to the house, putting down her load several times on the way. She was out of breath when she finally plumped the baby down in the armchair in the kitchen. It was not yet time for the bottle; so she amused Bertha by pounding on a tin cup with a spoon. Bertha stopped crying, and stared and smiled. When at last it was time for the bottle, Susie put the baby into the clothes basket, while the milk was being warmed.

Peace settled down in the house. The baby was happy and contented. Susie played with her a while, and then put her into the crib, which she had made up freshly. Bertha was asleep again, her round pink face and bald head showing above the blue blanket. Susie thought that she was the prettiest little creature ever born.

Susie had washed her hands before she filled the baby's bottle. She now washed them again, and then ran up to her room, almost as if she were doing something wrong. She wanted to handle the book which Eleanor had lent her. It was a book of queer old poems, and a man named Rackham had made pic-

tures to match them. Susie looked and looked at each picture, turning the leaves carefully with the tips of her fingers. The kitten came creeping up the stairs and purred around the little girl's ankles.

At last Susie put down the book with a guilty start. 'I s'pose I ought to be working,' she said to herself. She went downstairs and swept the kitchen, and built up the fire, and pared some potatoes, and did everything that she could think of. Once in a while she ran upstairs to peep into the wonderful book.

Bertha slept a long time. The house seemed dreadfully quiet and lonely. Susie thought about school and what all the pupils were doing. She wished that she could have heard the teacher read aloud. Now there would be only the one more chance to hear her.

At last there was the sound of footsteps. Mrs. Siegefried had come in to get the early dinner. She took off her dirty shoes outside the door.

'Well, you been here all the time?' she said.

'I got the potatoes ready and set the table,' said Susie quickly, to defend herself.

'Well, you could have done a good deal in the field,' said her mother. 'This afternoon we'll have to fix it so Bertha can sleep out there. We'll take the clothes basket out.'

Susie's heart sank. She didn't want to stay in the field all the afternoon. Her mother put on loose slippers, and shuffled about, getting dinner, with her

head still tied up in a white cloth. Susie took up the baby, who was fretting again. Presently Mr. Siegefried came in, and they sat down to eat. They had warmed-up soup, hot boiled potatoes, cheese, onions, rye bread, and prunes. While they were eating, Karl came stamping in, playing that he was an automobile.

After dinner, Susie walked out to the road with Karl. Charlotte Nelson came along on her way to school.

'Hullo, Susie,' she called. 'Aren't you going to school?'

Susie shook her head, with a sound like 'Nh-nh.'

'What you staying out for?' asked Charlotte.

'To help my mother,' answered Susie. She did not like to say that she had to work in the field.

'Aren't you going to the picnic?' inquired Charlotte.

'I — I don't know,' faltered Susie. For a minute she could hardly keep from crying.

'You don't want to *miss* it,' cried Charlotte, with a shocked face. 'And didn't you say you'd bring a cake?'

Susie nodded miserably. She pushed Karl out into the road, and then turned and ran back to the house. Mrs. Siegefried was washing little Bertha, and dressing her in clean clothes.

'You do the dishes, Susie,' she said.

Susie, hurrying with the dishes and pans, kept look-

ing at the dimpled, happy baby, so delicate and dainty, in contrast with her mother's work-worn hands.

When the dishes were finished, Mrs. Siegefried said, 'Now your Pop and I will take Bertha out in the clothes basket, so's you can work in the beets.'

Mr. Siegefried lifted one handle of the basket, and Mrs. Siegefried the other. They set the basket down in a shaded spot, and went on their knees to begin their work again. Susie watched Bertha until the little creature went to sleep and was carefully tucked up in the clothes basket. Then the older girl took her gunny sack and shuffled along on her knees through the nearest rows of beets, weeding and thinning, as fast as her little brown hands could fly. So the long afternoon passed. The baby woke, and Susie took her up and fed her, and played with her for a while. She loved to play 'Peek' with the tiny sister, who hardly knew what the game was about. The baby was awake a long while, but a part of the time she lay in her basket, and Susie went to the house to get water for her father and mother, and a slice of bread for herself. Then she went to work again, though her back ached, and she felt so tired that she wanted to sit on the grass and not move. Her face was dirty, and her clothes were soiled. There were dark hollows under her blue eyes.

At last Mrs. Siegefried said that it was time to go into the house. 'I'll wash my hands,' she called, and

went to the stream to rinse the worst of the dirt from her hands. She came back, walking heavily. Her face was red and wet and not very clean, beneath the white cloth which she wore around her head. 'Pop will bring the basket.' She took the baby from the weary arms of Susie, who carried the blankets and the bottle and the pail. Susie stumbled as she walked. She was too tired to care what she did.

'You rest yourself,' said Mrs. Siegefried, starting to build the fire. Susie hugged the kitten and lay down on the cot-sofa in the front room. In a minute she was sound asleep. When her mother called her to help with putting the supper on the table, she got up dazed and heavy, and ran here and there, hardly knowing what she was doing. She cut the bread and left it standing on the pantry shelf; and she poured water into the sugar bowl, instead of into her father's glass.

'I'll wash the dishes,' said her mother. Susie sat on the back steps with the kitten in her lap. It was a beautiful clear warm evening, but she was too tired to care. She went in and washed herself at the kitchen sink, and dragged herself upstairs to bed while the robins were still singing. She put her book under her pillow. For a few minutes she lay thinking how much she loved her room, and then she was heavily asleep again, a tired little girl.

Her mother did not mean to be unkind, but she thought that children should be brought up to work.

She believed that it did not hurt them to work hard and long. The beets had to be thinned, and everybody who could ought to help with thinning them. She had worked hard as a child, and expected Susie to do the same.

CHAPTER VIII

HI! HI! PICNIC!

THE next morning (Friday) Susie awoke when the sun came peering in at her window. Her first thought was of the school picnic. Oh, how she wanted to go! She stole downstairs barefooted, with her short fine hair uncombed. Just as she came into the kitchen, her father was saying, 'We got to work hard to-day. The weeds are gaining on us.'

'But, Pop-pa,' Susie cried out, 'I have to go to the picnic.' Her little face was strained and pitiful in its anxiety.

'What picnic?' Herman Siegefried was standing by the stove with his hands in his pockets.

'Why, the school picnic,' said Susie faintly. 'You know — we told you. The school has a picnic to-day. It's the last day.'

'Well, weeds and beets don't wait for picnics,' said Herman. His face was obstinate and angry.

'Oh, but Pop-pa, I just got to go,' moaned Susie, catching her breath.

'What! Can't they have the picnic without you?' Mr. Siegefried was only joking, but his words hurt Susie cruelly. She put her arm over her eyes and sobbed. Herman sat down to eat his breakfast.

Mrs. Siegefried spoke up impatiently, as she poured

her husband's coffee. 'She can't stand it, Herman, if she don't get to that picnic; what's more, I've got to make a cake for her to take.'

'A cake! How's that?' asked Herman.

'Everybody has to take something.'

'It seems funny that they don't get enough to eat to home,' Herman grumbled.

Susie was trying to talk, through her tears and sobs. 'I'll work evenings. I'll get up early. Oh, Pop-pa, they're going to have ice cream ——'

Her father went on eating without saying anything. Susie wiped her eyes on her dress. In her heart was a sinking despair.

'Come, Susie,' said her mother kindly. 'Don't cry. I'll *mach schnell*, and get you a cake made. I been saving the cream, the last two days. I'll make you a cream cake.'

Susie gave a jump. 'Honest, Mom?' she said, gasping with relief.

'Sure, sure. Now you eat your breakfast and go after the milk, and I'll hurry around and get things done before I go to the field.'

When Susie reached the milk-house, she saw Eleanor playing with one of the collie dogs in the yard.

'Hello, Susie,' called Eleanor. 'How are you getting along?'

'Awful good,' called Susie in reply. 'I'm in a hurry. I'm going to the school picnic to-day.'

'Why, of course you are!' Eleanor stopped playing with the dog, and smiled at her friend. 'I forgot it was to-day. Are you going to take anything? Can we help you?'

'Mom's going to make me a cream cake.' Susie spoke importantly. A cream cake was a rare treat. 'She's makin' it now, I guess.'

'That's lovely.' Eleanor looked pleased. 'Can you get it there all right?'

'Oh, I guess so,' said Susie. She went into the milk-house to get the milk.

When she came out, Eleanor said, 'What are you going to wear?' Susie had on one of her old long-skirted dresses.

'The nice blue dress you gave me,' answered Susie. The traces of tears had gone from her face, and she looked bright and happy.

'I'm glad you're going, Susie,' said Eleanor.

'I was awful scared I wasn't,' answered Susie, as she hurried away with the pail.

Back at home, she found her mother beating cream with an egg-beater. Karl was eating oatmeal at the kitchen table. Herman had gone to the field.

'Susie, you hurry and wash the dishes, and then get yourself washed and dressed,' said Mrs. Siegefried.

Susie fell to washing dishes like a wild girl. She dropped a cup and broke it, and her mother scolded. Susie didn't mind the scolding. She was watching her mother take the cake-layers out of the oven. They

came out golden and puffy. Susie stopped working and stared while her mother spread the thick sweetened cream over the lower layer, and put on the upper one. More cream went over the top of the cake.

'M-m,' murmured Susie. 'It looks awful good.'

She did not ask to clean out the dish, but let Karl scrape it and lick the spoon.

Susie felt perfectly happy as she stood and looked at the cake. It would be as good as anything the other children would bring — better than most of the food. Mrs. Siegefried put the cake into a big milk-pan, and spread a paper over the top.

'You'll have to carry it awful careful,' she said. 'I don't know but it's too big for you, Susie. You mustn't let it drop,' she added anxiously.

Susie shuddered. 'I won't let it drop,' she cried. 'You needn't be scared. I'll carry it just as careful.'

'I hope you will.' Mrs. Siegefried was tying up her head in a cloth.

'Thank you, Mom, for making the cake,' said Susie earnestly. She knew that it was hard for her mother to work in the field and take care of the baby, and attend to the housework.

'I'm glad I could get it done,' answered Mrs. Siegefried. 'Now you get yourself dressed. Comb your hairs nice and smooth.' She always said *hairs* in the German way, instead of *hair*.

Susie was hanging up her dishcloth. She washed herself at the sink, getting ready to put on her good clothes.

'Don't put on your best shoes till it's time to start,' said her mother. 'You'll scuff 'em out.' Now they could hear Bertha making a little whimpering noise in her crib. Mrs. Siegefried went to take her up and dress her, while Susie put on her own blue frock. She always felt excited when she put it on, because it was so pretty and made her look so nice, and because Eleanor had given it to her.

'*Ach, schön!*' said her mother. 'You look real good, Susie. But I like best to know you're clean. One dress is as good as another.'

'No, it isn't.' Susie shook her head violently. 'Some dresses are lots nicer than others.'

Mrs. Siegefried was putting on Bertha's little coat. 'I got to go to the field now,' she said. 'When it's time, put on your shoes and — now be awful careful of the cake.'

'I will.' Susie gave Bertha a kiss on her fat cheek. 'And oh, Mom, thank you again for the cake. *Danke! Danke!*'

'It's good your father lets you go, with the weeds and the beets coming up so fast,' said Mrs. Siegefried. 'Karl, you keep that blouse clean. Don't spill stuff on it.'

Karl had been playing with the kitten. 'I guess I won't,' he said slowly. Karl cared little for blouses.

'I'll try to keep him clean,' spoke up Susie, who felt herself a kind of little mother to Karl.

Mrs. Siegefried lifted Bertha in her arms, and took hold of the clothes basket by one handle, to carry it to the field.

'Karl 'n' I can carry it,' said Susie eagerly.

'No. I can manage. You stay here and get ready.' Mrs. Siegefried tramped away with the baby and the basket, and was lost to sight behind the plum trees.

Susie watched the clock. She made her own bed and Karl's, and hung up their everyday clothes.

'Oh, I'm going to the picnic, the picnic!' she sang. 'I'm going to the picnic!'

'What's a picnic?' asked Karl gruffly. He had never seemed to pay much attention to what was said about the 'last day.'

'It's where you eat outdoors, and have lots to eat. Everybody brings something,' Susie explained. Now she put on her best brown shoes. 'I hope I don't spoil 'em,' she muttered. She shut up the stove, then she kissed the kitten, and put him into the shed, with a saucer of milk. 'Good-bye, honey,' she whispered, as she had heard Eleanor do.

She and Karl started for the schoolhouse, Susie carrying the big pan with the cake in it. Her anxious face looked out over the top of the pan.

'Karl, don't push up so close to me,' she panted. 'No, I can't take hold of your hand.'

Just as Susie and Karl reached the main road, the Nelson children came along.

'What you got for the picnic, Susie?' they called.

'A cake!' said Susie proudly.

'Lemme see it,' begged one of the boys.

'No, sir, you'd drop it,' answered Susie, backing away, and clutching the pan more tightly. Her arms ached already with the effort of holding it.

'It's hard for you to carry, Susie,' said Charlotte, who was a strong Danish girl of thirteen. Her brother Hans was carrying a basket with sandwiches in it. 'Three kinds,' Charlotte explained — egg and cheese and peanut butter. 'Here, Susie,' she went on, 'let me carry that cake.'

Susie gave up the pan rather unwillingly, but she was relieved, too.

'I know you'll be careful,' she said.

''Course I will. You look awful nice, Susie,' said Charlotte generously. She was wearing a fresh white dress, not new, but clean, and beautifully ironed.

As they drew near the schoolhouse, more children appeared, carrying baskets and boxes.

'Hi! Picnic! Picnic!' called Karl.

'Picnic, picnic!' answered the small boys at the schoolhouse steps. Everybody seemed excited and eager. The teacher was smiling more than usual; but she looked anxious, too. She had a good many things on her mind.

Susie took her cake up to the desk. 'Here, Teacher,' she said breathlessly; 'this is what I brought.'

'Thank you, Susie.' The teacher took the paper off the top of the cake. 'Oh, how splendid!' she cried. 'Why, that's just fine. Look, children. Doesn't that look delicious?'

'It's cream cake,' explained Susie, delighted to see the teacher so pleased.

'M-m-m!' murmured the boys. Susie was the proudest little girl in the State.

Now the teacher rang the bell. The well-dressed group of children hurried to their seats, and sat up straight, their eyes bright and alert. Never had they sung so lustily, or kept such good time. They could hardly bear to stop singing; but when they came to their 'rithmetic reviews, they were just as full of energy. Susie stood up in her class and rattled off the multiplication table like a cheerful little machine:

'Tootums two 're four;
Tootums three 're six;
Tootums four 're eight,'

and so on, until the teacher stopped her, and Allie Sykes took up the refrain:

'Tootums six 're twelve;
Tootums seven 're fourteen —'

It made Susie feel lively and important to be able to point out places on the map, and name the capitals

of the States, and give a list of the productions of the Mississippi Valley. Her cheeks were flushed with triumph when she 'bounded' Ohio, after Allie had blundered and blushed and sunk into her seat ashamed.

A few parents had come in when school began. After recess a number of others arrived with baskets. The feeling of expectation became stronger as the dinner hour came nearer. Now there were more songs, for the benefit of the visitors; and there were 'pieces,' spoken by a few of the older pupils. Charlotte Nelson recited a long poem about a dog that saved somebody's life. Susie did not understand it all, but she loved to hear it, just the same; and she was glad when everybody clapped and clapped, so that Charlotte grew red with modest pleasure. One of the big boys, Harry Everard, spoke a funny piece about an Irishman who had found a ten-dollar bill; and the audience laughed at almost everything he said, and everybody clapped for him when he had finished. He had to come back to the front of the room and make a bow. This seemed to Susie a wonderful thing.

After more singing, the teacher gave out the report cards. By this time, all the pupils were like fenced-in colts — wild to get loose. When the teacher said, 'School is dismissed,' and marched the pupils out, everybody kept order, and yet every one was impatient to break away. Once out of doors, the boys and girls ran around madly and squealed, just to make up for having had to sit still.

A green spot under some big trees had been chosen for the picnic ground. Mr. Cummings, the creamery man, came with the ice cream in a tall wooden tub.

'I scream! I scream!' yelled the small boys, pushing and tripping one another in their delight.

Mrs. Nelson and Mrs. Griffith were making lemonade in bright tin pails. 'Put in plenty of sugar,' piped up one of the little girls.

'Now, children, you must sit still and not tear around and spill things,' said the teacher, in a high anxious voice. 'We'll have the sandwiches and such things first, and then the ice cream and cake.'

'Hooray!' cried all the boys at once.

Charlotte Nelson and her mother helped to pass the sandwiches and the hot baked beans which Mrs. Tobin, who lived nearest to the schoolhouse, had prepared. Susie had never seen any paper plates, and it seemed surprising to her that they could be passed around with beans on them. There were even paper spoons to eat the beans with, but no knives or forks. It seemed as if there were an endless supply of sandwiches, with eggs or cheese or peanut butter or jam. Susie took one every time that they were passed, hoping that she didn't appear too greedy. Some of the boys put their plates on the ground, so that they could hold two sandwiches at once, biting first one and then the other. Susie made Karl sit beside her, and 'behave nice.' She let him have only one sandwich at a time, and wouldn't let him drink all his

lemonade at one gulp. As she set her teeth into the layers of bread, butter, and raspberry jam, she looked around at the picnic group, and was happy. She forgot all about the beets and weeds and her long day's work in the fields.

The great event was the opening of the ice-cream tub. 'Hooray!' shouted the boys again. The teacher, with a serious face, dipped out big pyramids of ice cream upon fresh paper plates. Oh, how good it was! Susie ate hers slowly, so that it would last a long time. Now came the passing of the cakes. There were some delicious ones, but none so good as Susie's.

'See, children,' cried the teacher, 'Susie brought this cake with the cream on it. I've tried to cut it so that every one can have a piece.'

'Hooray for Susie,' cheered the boys, and Susie grew as red as a cherry, while her heart was beating fast with excitement and wonder. Nothing in her life had ever been so beautiful as this picnic — not even the 'shower' at the Bolton house. Here she was a part of everything. She had brought a cake, and had done something for the rest. She had not merely let people do things for her. She was wearing a good dress, and her hair was cut short, and she was right in the middle of the picnic, having a good time. She felt as if she were in a dream, and she hardly knew whether any one spoke to her or not.

There was plenty of ice cream. 'I believe every one can have another spoonful,' said the teacher. Every

one watched anxiously while the paper plates were passed back for more; and no one had to go without.

'It's lovely, lovely ice cream,' murmured Susie; and then she scolded Karl for spilling his on his blouse.

When every one had eaten all he could possibly hold, the teacher stood up and clapped her hands to get attention, and said, 'Now, you must sit still for a little while after dinner, and not romp around. We'll sing some of our school songs. Sing softly, and show how well you can do.'

The children sang with a will, keeping their voices down. Then they recited in concert some 'pieces' which they had learned before Susie came to school.

'Now you may play games,' said the teacher; and everybody jumped up and rushed about, calling 'Pump-pump-pull-away,' 'Crack the Whip,' 'Tag, tag,' 'Duck on a Rock,' 'Drop the Handkerchief.' Some played one game and some another.

Susie was like a little wild bird, flitting here and there, not making much noise, but thrilling and quivering with happiness. 'Oh, it's so nice to be at the picnic!' she sang over and over in a kind of whisper. She wished that the picnic could last forever.

At half-past two, the teacher clapped her hands again, and said in a loud voice, 'Now it's all over. Time to go home. Take your books and wraps. Good-bye, boys and girls.'

'Good-bye, teacher! Good-bye! Good-bye! Happy vacation,' the boys and girls shouted in chorus.

The teacher's sister arrived in a Ford car to take her home. There were a few other cars for some of the children. Allie Sykes' mother had come for her. Susie took her pencil-box and books. She felt sorry that the 'last day' and the glorious picnic were over. In her still, eager way, she had taken in everything that had happened, throbbing with her new experiences. *It would have been terrible* if she had not been able to come at all! She could not even bear to think of such a thing.

She found Karl's reader and writing pad and his ruler and pencil-box. She was sorry now that school was out. She liked the pupils and the teacher better than she had thought she was going to like them.

She heard the teacher calling, 'Susie! Susie!' Rushing out of the schoolhouse, dragging Karl, she saw the teacher and her sister standing beside their car. 'Susie and Karl, get in here. We'll drive you home,' said the teacher. What a wonderful thing to happen! 'Here's your plate and here's your pan,' said Miss Hart. Susie had forgotten about them. Proud and bewildered, Susie boosted Karl and climbed into the car. The teacher went back into the schoolhouse for her books and dishes. Nearly all the pupils had gone. Miss Hart locked up the schoolhouse, and put the key into her purse. Suddenly Susie felt how sad

it was for the little schoolhouse to stand there empty all summer.

But now the teacher was getting into the car, and sitting on the little seat that let down in front.

'Hi! hi!' said Karl.

What fun it was to dash along the road between the hazel bushes, where one usually tramped slowly on foot!

'Oh, I wish my Pa would have a car,' said Susie.

'Maybe he will,' said the teacher. She was talking to her sister about the best way to get home. They lived twenty miles away, she said.

The teacher drove right down the lane, almost up to the house. Susie wished that some one could see her riding home in a car. But her mother and father were in the field. She hated to get out, but did not want to keep the teacher waiting. Down she climbed, pulling Karl after her. Out came books, pencil-boxes, plate, and pan.

'Good-bye, Susie,' said the teacher kindly. 'Perhaps I'll see you in the fall. Good-bye, Karl.'

'Good-bye — good-bye!' called the two children. The car puffed and whirred and rattled away.

Susie, left standing among the grass and may-weed near the barn, looked after the car, almost crying. It had been such a happy day!

She roused herself. 'We're awful late home. It must be nearly three o'clock.' She ran into the shed

to cuddle the kitten, then hurried upstairs to take off her best dress and shoes.

Barefooted and wearing her old blue dress, she sped through the yard and out into the beet field.

CHAPTER IX

BAD TIMES AND GOOD ONES

On Saturday, the Siegefrieds were out in the field at an early hour. Susie went after the milk, and helped to set the house to rights, and took care of the baby; and then she settled down to a long forenoon of work, thinning and weeding the beets, and looking out for Baby Bertha. At noon Susie was so tired that she felt as if she could not go out to the field again. She could not eat much dinner, but drank some milk and ate some rye bread.

'I guess you ate too much cake yesterday,' said her father. 'Them picnics are sort o' foolish, I think.'

'No, they aren't,' returned Susie quickly. Remembering the picnic and the ride home in the car was the only happiness which she had during that time of hard work with the beets.

After dinner, she plodded out to the field with the others. She thought about Eleanor and Beatrice, and wondered what they would be doing. Their school was not out yet, but on Saturday they would be free to have a good time.

Susie worked on bravely till nearly three o'clock. Her hands were heavy, and her head hurt, and her back ached. All at once she felt so queer that she

called to her mother, who was not far away, 'Mom! Mom!'

'What you want?' answered her mother impatiently. Bertha was asleep in her basket, and must not be wakened.

'Mom! Mom!' called Susie again. She was not sure that her mother had answered.

Mrs. Siegefried came over to the spot where Susie was kneeling on her gunny sack. 'What's the matter?' she asked, not very kindly.

'Oh, I feel so bad,' cried Susie putting her hand to her head.

'Oh, no, I guess not,' answered her mother.

'Yes, I do,' said the little girl, half-crying.

'Where you feel bad?' asked Mrs. Siegefried, staring down at her.

'I don't know. Just bad.' Susie's little dirty face was flushed and her eyes were haggard.

'You better go up to the house,' said her mother.

'I wish you'd go with me,' whimpered the child. Her body felt too heavy to drag that far alone.

'I can't. I got to work,' said Mrs. Siegefried.

'Oh, Mom!' Susie began to cry in real earnest.

Mrs. Siegefried stood for a moment, and then went back to where her husband was working, and spoke to him. He answered and nodded without looking up. Mrs. Siegefried came back to Susie, and lifted her up by the arms. The little girl walked along unsteadily among the beet rows, shaking and crying.

She could hardly see where she was going. It seemed as if she could never get to the house, even with her mother to lean on.

'I guess you're all right. Proba'ly you ate something,' said Mrs. Siegefried.

Susie stumbled into the kitchen, and sank into a chair. It seemed dim and cool there, and she could breathe better. Her mother gave her a drink of water, and wiped her face with a cool wet cloth, saying, 'You better go lie down.' Susie blundered into the front room, and lay down on the narrow couch. The room had been shut up, and it was cool and dark. Susie turned over on her side, and rested and dozed. She heard her mother moving about the house. Presently Mrs. Siegefried came to the door.

'I'll come back pretty soon,' she said. 'I got to go an' see to Baby.'

'M-m —' said Susie, for that was all that she could murmur. She fell into a disturbed sleep. She knew that her legs ached, and that she felt badly somewhere else, though she could not have told where. After what seemed a long time, her mother was back in the house. Susie heard Bertha crowing and gabbling in her soft little voice. Dishes rattled, and the smell of cooking came into the front room. Once Mrs. Siegefried looked in and said, 'How you feel now, Susie?' Susie was too sleepy to answer, and her mother went away again.

After a while, Susie heard voices in the kitchen. Who was speaking? she wondered. Oh, yes, now she knew. Eleanor and Beatrice were there. Susie started up on her elbow. She heard her mother saying, 'Susie's not so well.'

'Not well?' cried Eleanor. 'Oh, I'm sorry.'

'She's in there,' said Mrs. Siegefried.

Eleanor peeped in, and then came forward slowly. 'How are you, Susie?' she asked.

Susie did not feel like talking. She sank back on the sofa, muttering, 'So tired.'

'You work too hard,' said Eleanor angrily. What could Eleanor be angry about?

'I — get so tired,' said Susie faintly. A queer dizzy feeling came over her again, and she could not say any more. She closed her eyes and lay back weakly on the couch.

'Poor Susie!' Eleanor took the little girl's hand. 'I'm so sorry you don't feel well. I hope you'll be out in the morning.' Susie heard some one speaking in a low voice to Eleanor. It must be Beatrice. 'Poor Susie!' said some one again. 'Good-bye!'

The two girls went out of the room.

Susie, feeling a little better, heard Beatrice saying, 'Mrs. Siegefried, don't you think that Susie works too hard?'

'I don't know,' said Mrs. Siegefried, slowly. 'She just helps a little in the beet field. We got to get the beets thinned before they get too big.'

'YOU WORK TOO HARD,' SAID ELEANOR

'But — it's sort of hard for Susie,' argued Beatrice.

'I guess it don't hurt her,' answered Mrs. Siegefried stubbornly. 'She runs around so much, and yesterday, I s'pose she ate a lot at that picnic.'

'Well — I wish she didn't have to work in the field,' said Eleanor. Susie did not hear any more. It did not matter what the Bolton girls said, she thought; she would have to work just the same.

After a while, her mother came in and said, 'Supper's ready. You come and eat.'

Susie shook her head. 'I ain't hungry,' was all she could say.

'You better eat,' said her mother.

'Not now.' Susie wished that nobody would talk to her.

Mrs. Siegefried went back to the kitchen. Susie heard the family sit down at the table. She dozed. Then she was awake again, wanting a drink of water.

Her father was saying, 'Susie don't work so well. She kind o' gives out. Too bad we don't have a good big boy, instead of a girl.'

Tears started to the eyes of the little girl on the sofa. She had tried so hard to work well, so that her father would be pleased! She heard her mother say, '*Ach*, Herman, Susie is fine, if she is a girl. She's *gemütlich*, Herman.'

That was better. Susie was glad that her mother had spoken up for her, using the German word

gemütlich, which meant so much of what was good and pleasant and sweet-tempered.

'Yeah. But a boy would be more help,' said her father, supping at his soup. 'Karl will be a good one when he gets older. He's so strong. He'll be good to work.'

Susie felt ashamed of her weakness in giving out. Oh, if she had only been able to keep on till supper time! This was Saturday; and on Sunday she could have a part of a day of rest.

Her mother came in with a bowl and a plate. Susie ate something — she hardly knew what.

'You sit up,' said her mother, at last. 'I'll wash your feet and put you to bed.'

Somehow Susie was pushed and dragged upstairs, and deposited in her bed. She lay with her kitten cuddled on her arm, and the blanket pulled up around her. She heard Karl tooting like an automobile, and heard the birds chirping and the cows moo-ing, and the hired men at the Big House calling to one another and laughing. It grew dusky in the room. Susie half-slept and half-wakened, while the kitten put his little soft paws on her arm and purred.

Her mother came to the door. 'You all right, Susie?' she asked.

'Mmh,' answered Susie.

'To-morrow's Sunday. We won't work much,' said her mother. 'You'll get a rest.' Susie fell into a sound sleep.

In the morning she woke to see her mother standing by her bed. 'How you feel, Susie?' she was asking.

'Better, I guess.' Susie blinked and yawned. 'Do I have to work to-morrow?'

'We'll see. I'll bring you something to eat.'

It seemed strange to lie in bed and have toast and milk and oatmeal. Susie did not get up till noon, and then she felt useless and shaky. The two Bolton girls came in the afternoon with a cup-custard and a book. Susie tried to talk to them, but she trembled and felt ill, and had to go back to bed. She was ashamed to have them see how good-for-nothing she was. She had wanted to tell them about the picnic.

'Poor Susie!' said Eleanor, patting her hand.

On Monday, Susie was out of bed at seven o'clock, feeling more like herself, but not very lively or very strong.

'I guess you better not come out in the field,' said her mother. 'You just stay in, an' take care of Bertha and get dinner.' Susie was glad not to go into the field. Merely caring for Bertha and the house seemed easy. But the forenoon was long and tiresome. When Bertha was asleep, Susie went out and looked at her father and mother in the field, working steadily, like machines, shifting forward on their knees, pulling and pulling and pulling at the beets and weeds. 'Oh, dear!' thought the little girl, 'why do people have to have beets?' She went into the house

again and lay on the sofa until it was time to get dinner.

The afternoon was tiresome too, until a splendid thing happened. About four o'clock, the Boltons drove right up to the house in their car. Susie heard the snort of the engine and ran out with Bertha in her arms.

'How-do, Susie!' called both the girls at once. Beatrice was on the front seat with her father, and Eleanor on the back seat with her mother.

'We've come to take you for a ride,' called Eleanor. 'Jump right in here, on the back seat.'

Susie nearly dropped Miss Bertha in her excitement. 'But I've got to take care of Baby,' she stammered. Oh, how she wanted to go for a ride in the big car!

'Baby is to go along,' said Mrs. Bolton. 'Put her little cap on, and let me hold her.'

Susie could hardly believe her ears. All in a flutter, she ran for the baby's cap and sweater. She did not need any wrap herself, because the day was so warm.

Mrs. Bolton cuddled Bertha up in her arms as if she loved babies. It was a relief to Susie to have the ride without trying to hold the baby.

'Do you think my Mom would let me go?' she asked, just as Mr. Bolton was starting the car.

'Oh, I'm sure she would,' said Mrs. Bolton; 'but if you're worried, Mr. Bolton will go and speak to her.'

Susie felt dreadfully embarrassed to have Mr. Bolton get out of the car and walk over to the edge of the field and shout at the Siegefrieds; but she was glad, too, that she did not have to ride away without telling her mother that she was gone. Then came the ride — the floating through the warm air at an entrancing speed, while the fields and houses and little lakes flew past like objects in a dream.

Susie was all happiness. She felt suddenly better — felt really well. Bertha nestled solemnly up to Mrs. Bolton, and then went to sleep with her head on the lady's arm. Beatrice and Eleanor chattered gayly about what they saw; but Susie did not hear all that was said. She was feeling a great relief and rest and joy in getting away from the kitchen and the beet field, and seeing something different — something which could make up for the tiredness and the misery of the last few days.

'How nice it is that Susie can go with us!' said Mrs. Bolton, smiling prettily over the baby's head.

Susie was dumb; but she smiled back with such happiness that her pale little face was lighted up, and the color came back into her cheeks, and the haggard lines and dark shadows of weariness flitted swiftly away.

Susie did not have to work in the beet fields again while the thinning was going on. Mr. Siegefried grumbled and said again that he wished Susie were

a boy; but Mrs. Siegefried answered that she was glad to have a girl to keep her company, and then Susie did not hear any more talk about herself. She had to sit beside Bertha when the baby lay in the basket on the edge of the field; and she had to run to the house for water or the baby's bottle. She had to go in and get the dinner ready, too, and wash the dishes and sweep the floor and see that the rooms were in order. All this was hard enough, but it was so much easier than pulling up weeds, that Susie was glad and thankful.

About the time that the thinning was finished, rain came on. Mr. Siegefried looked bent and weary, and his wife was worn and fretful with her long hours of work. Life was almost too hard to bear, until the last seemingly endless row was thinned and weeded.

When Susie awoke in the morning, her room was dull and gray. She thought at first that morning had not come; but she heard her father and mother moving around downstairs. Hopping out of bed, she ran to the window. The sky was heavy and black, and rain was falling steadily, as if it had been falling for a long time.

'Oh, dear!' said Susie; and then she checked her complaints. If it rained, there would not be so much to do as usual, and she could have more time for herself.

She put on her clothes — all except her shoes and stockings — and ran downstairs, the kitten (Blinky)

scampering beside her, and reaching for her bare toes.

'Well, it rains down,' said her mother, who was standing beside the stove with a cup of coffee in her hand. Herman, with a sack over his shoulders, was just starting out of the house with the milkpail.

'He's going to get the milk, so you don't need to,' said Mrs. Siegefried.

Susie was sorry not to have a chance to see Eleanor and Beatrice, but she was relieved at not having to go up to the milk-house in the rain. She sat down to her breakfast of oatmeal and *kuchen*. The day was raw and cool, and the warmth of the stove was welcome. She washed the dishes and tidied the kitchen, while her mother bathed and dressed little Bertha. Mrs. Siegefried did not often take time to play with the baby, but to-day she cuddled the little thing on her lap and held her for quite a while. Mr. Siegefried was slow in coming back, because he stopped at the barn to talk with one of the men. It was cozy in the house, Susie thought, with just her mother and the baby and Blinky. Karl came downstairs after a while, and had his breakfast. Susie slipped upstairs to make her bed and Karl's, and she took a long time at them, especially at her own. She pulled the ruffled spread this way and that, to see how it looked best. She set the pillows up, and then laid them flat, and then propped them up again. She moved the rug to different places on the floor, and at last put it back

beside the bed. She looped the curtains an inch higher than they had been, and pinned up a little colored picture which Eleanor had given her.

After she had finished 'fussing' with her room, she sat down beside the window and looked out through the driving rain. She could see the chimneys of the Big House, and the tops of the red barns. She wondered what Beatrice and Eleanor were doing. She peered down at her mother's garden, where the cabbages and carrots were growing; and at the flower garden, where the yellow and orange lilies were drooping in the downpour. The white phlox was half in blossom, and beside it grew some sprays of red sweet-william. It was pleasant to see the flowers, even with the rain sliding down over them in a steady silver stream.

Susie took from the table a book which Eleanor had lent her. It was full of pictures in color and in black-and-white. How pleasant it was, to sit there quietly by the window, and hear the *slap-slap* of the rain, and know that you didn't have to go out, and that there was time to look at a book and read and read. Susie's mother did not call her, and Karl did not come rushing up to bother her. The house was quiet, except for the *pouf-pouf* which Karl made, pretending that he was a threshing machine. The little girl forgot about everything but her book, until a spicy smell stole up the stairs. She raised her head and sniffed. Her mother must be baking ginger-snaps. Susie tried

to go back to her book; but the smell of the cookies was too much for her. She smoothed the book with her fingers, and held it to her cheek. 'I love it,' she whispered. Then she laid it carefully on the table and went downstairs softly on her bare feet.

Her mother was just putting a pan of floury cookies into the oven. Karl was sitting on a chair too high for him, swinging his feet and eating a fresh ginger-snap.

'M-m-m — I want one!' cried Susie.

'I thought they would bring you down,' laughed her mother, handing the little girl a rich brown cooky, still warm from the oven. 'On a bad day, it's nice to have something good to eat. I'm going to make potato dumplings for dinner.'

The day was a restful happy one. Mr. Siegefried found that there was work for him at the barns, mending and greasing harnesses. Karl went to sleep on the sofa, and slept nearly all the forenoon. Susie had to sew for half an hour at her patchwork pieces; but she hardly minded, because she was not tired and the pieces were rather pretty: scraps of gingham and percale dresses which the girls in her school in the city had given her just before she came to the country. She had to take care of Bertha for a while, but she did not mind that task, either; for the little creature was so bright and smiling and funny that it was a joy to watch her and amuse her.

'I wish it would rain every day,' sighed Susie.

'No, you don't. You'd get tired of it,' said her

mother. 'This rain will bring up the weeds higher than ever. We'll have to get out after them again.'

'Oh, how terrible!' Susie groaned.

'Don't worry about it. Take your rest to-day,' said her mother sensibly.

When Mr. Siegefried came home for supper, he had a parcel wrapped thickly with newspapers.

'One of the girls sent it to you,' he said.

'Oh! Oh!' Susie tore off the wrappings. Under them was a large square parcel in brown paper, and a note: 'I'm lending you my Rainy Day Scrapbook. You may bring it back after a while. B——.'

The book was a loose-leaf one, carefully pasted up with the most fascinating short stories and pictures and jokes.

'Dast I look at it now?' pleaded Susie, who felt that she could not endure waiting a moment.

'*Ja.* I'll get the supper ready,' answered her mother.

Susie ran upstairs with the book and crouched close to the window. She turned the leaves slowly and studied every picture and tried to read the poems and understand what the jokes were about.

Dark was coming on and she had to close the book. But just then came the call to supper, and Susie put the precious scrapbook on the table and ran downstairs, saying to herself, 'What a nice wet day!'

CHAPTER X

TWO INVITATIONS

One afternoon Susie was sitting on the doorstep, with the kitten on her lap, and her patchwork pieces in a little basket beside her. It was a round splint basket which Mrs. Siegefried's mother had brought from Germany, and Susie felt proud to keep her pieces in it. She was sewing a little square of blue calico to a three-cornered piece of white sheeting, when she heard the familiar 'Hoo-hoo!' which was Eleanor's call to her. She looked up eagerly. Here came Eleanor, skipping and running along the lane leading from the bridge. Susie started to get up, and then she remembered the kitten in her lap. She sat waiting, with her needle stuck into the puckered seam of her patchwork.

Eleanor dashed up the path, and plumped down on the steps beside Susie.

'Oh, I'm all out of breath,' she panted. 'Papa's going to take us over to Marl Lake, to go in bathing, and we want you to come along.'

'What? To go in the water?' asked Susie, her eyes widening.

'Yes. You'd like that, wouldn't you? You've been in the creek here.'

Susie put her sewing down and clapped her hands excitedly. 'Oh, I want to go, I want to go, but ——'

'You haven't any bathing suit?'

'No. I don't have one. I just wore an old dress when I went in here.'

'We always keep two extra ones on hand, for company who come without any,' said Eleanor. 'So that's all right. You come along. We'll fix you up.'

Susie felt better. She was wild to go in bathing with the other girls, but she could not bear to go in an old gingham dress. 'I'll ask my Mom,' she said, scrambling up with the kitten in her arms.

Mrs. Siegefried was willing that Susie should go. 'If some one watches you, I shall not worry,' she said, though she had an anxious frown. 'You swim like a stone, I'm afraid, my Susie. You need that some one should look out for you.'

'Papa will watch us every minute,' said Eleanor from the doorway. 'We're starting right away. Come on, Susie! Come on!'

Susie tore around, putting away her basket and snatching a clean towel out of the cupboard drawer. She stopped to kiss little Bertha, and to give her kitty a pat and a kind word. Then she was rushing up the lane with Eleanor, and climbing into the car, and being whirled away to Marl Lake. The car sped along between fields of grain, and then between rows of maple and oak trees, and then among tall dark pines, which made dusky shadows overhead. The ground here was covered with brown pine needles, and there was hardly any underbrush, so that you

could look far, far back through the trees, and see the dim places where the wood-creatures might be lurking. After a while, the woods seemed to open, and all at once Susie could see the lake, small and still and cool, with its sloping banks of green. The water itself was a light silvery green, because the lake was shallow, and the bottom was of white marl, made of the powdered fragments of shells. In one place, near the road, a little sandy beach lay in a curving line along the shore.

'Isn't it beautiful?' cried Beatrice, as the car stopped. Her dark eyes were glowing. 'We just love coming here, but somehow we don't do it very often.'

'It's grand,' Susie agreed.

Mr. Bolton was helping the girls out of the car, with a swing of his strong arms. 'Now get yourselves ready,' he said, 'and I'll watch you for half an hour. There's the dressing-room,' he added, turning to Susie. 'You haven't seen that yet.'

'Papa made it for us,' Eleanor was explaining. There stood a little hut of branches, with no roof — a sort of screened-off place for the girls to undress and dress in.

Beatrice handed Susie a bright red bathing-suit, soft and pretty, with white stripes running around it. Susie was in it in less than no time, and ready for the dash to the water. Eleanor had a green suit, and Beatrice had one of dark blue with touches of red.

'Race you!' called Eleanor. The three girls ran like young deer down to the shore, with squeals of laughter. Eleanor was first in the water. Beatrice was next. Susie hesitated for a moment on the beach, and then waded in, instead of making the glorious splash which had delighted the other girls.

'Come on! Come on!' cried Eleanor.

'Jump right in,' said Mr. Bolton. 'It isn't deep. I'll take care of you.'

Susie let herself down into the water, which was pleasantly warm as it gurgled up around her body. Her toes looked white and 'wriggly' on the bottom of the lake.

'I'm going to splash you,' called Eleanor. 'Look out.' She splashed a little water on Susie's back, and then turned to send a sprinkle of water on the bobbed head of Beatrice.

Susie plunged in up to her shoulders, and floundered and splashed with the others. Eleanor and Beatrice could swim a little, and they tried to show her how to keep herself up in the water, and how to make her arms go, in a swimming motion. She did not do very well, but she felt proud to have the girls so willing to help her.

'If I had a bathing-suit on, I'd teach you in short order,' said Mr. Bolton. He was standing on the bank, keeping his eyes on every motion which the girls made, and laughing at their antics.

'It's so nice to be here by ourselves,' said Beatrice,

'in such a woodsy place, with the trees all around, and the water such a sort of fairy-land color.'

Susie understood the beauty of it all, and she wanted to say how much she loved the green quietness of woods and water; but as usual she had no words for what she felt. She could only look, and squeeze Eleanor's wet hand when a kingfisher swooped down from a tree to the glassy surface of the lake, and a flock of little yellow finches swung and chattered on the reeds along the shore.

When half an hour of romping had passed, Mr. Bolton sang out, 'Don't you think you've been in long enough, girls?'

'Oh, no!' answered Eleanor, flapping her arms in protest.

But Beatrice said, 'I guess we have, Papa. I'm ready for the picnic.'

This was the first time that Susie had heard of anything to eat. She was willing to wade out of the water, after one final plunge and spatter and splash, and run for the dressing-room, where her clothes hung on a roughly sawed-off branch. In a trice she was dressed and venturing out on the bank where Mr. Bolton was opening a box of sandwiches, and unscrewing the tops of two thermos bottles.

'We always eat something after a swim,' said Beatrice. 'Oh, I hope Martha put up some peanut butter sandwiches.'

The milk was poured out into paper cups, and the

sandwiches were laid on paper plates. How good the luncheon tasted, out there in the open, beside the green-and-silver lake!

At last everything was eaten. Mr. Bolton made a tiny fire on a sandy spot, where some smoke-blackened stones lay in a circle, and burned the paper plates and cups and napkins. He brought some water in the thermos bottles, to sprinkle over the sparks and ashes, so that no harm could be done by the fire. The wet bathing-suits, hanging on the bushes, were wrung out and put away in an oilcloth bag.

'All aboard! Homeward bound!' cried Mr. Bolton. 'Scramble in, girls.'

This time Eleanor sat on the front seat with her father, and Beatrice sat back with Susie. The car glided away from the lake, which was soon only a flash of light, clear green among the dark pine trees. Now it was gone, and the car was purring along between the tall tree-trunks with the brown pine needles underneath. When he reached the main road Mr. Bolton turned off to take a long way home; so that it was well on toward supper time when he finally drove into the yard of the Big House.

Susie stepped out of the car, sorry that the afternoon was over, and yet glowing with the thought of her good time. Before she could think of anything to say, Beatrice spoke up: 'Susie, can't you stay for supper?'

'Oh, my!' Susie hung down her head, overcome

with shyness. She could not believe that the girls really wanted her to stay.

'Wouldn't you like to?' asked Eleanor. She was getting used to Susie's timid ways. Susie did not answer, but kept her head down and nodded slowly. 'Wouldn't you?' repeated Eleanor.

'Yes,' said Susie in a husky voice; 'I'd like it awfully.'

'Let's tell your father.' Eleanor ran off toward the barns, Susie following. They found Herman carrying a milking-stool toward the cow-yard. 'Mr. Siegefried, Susie's going to stay for supper with us,' called Eleanor.

'All right,' answered Herman gruffly. Susie wished that he would speak in a nicer way. 'Don't you be out late,' he said, turning to her.

'No, I won't. Tell Mom-ma to feed my kitten, please, Pop-pa,' Susie replied.

'All right.' Herman walked away with his milking-stool. Susie and Eleanor went back to the Big House. Martha, in the kitchen, was getting supper; and pleasant sounds and smells floated out to the porch, where Beatrice was playing with the dogs. After a little while, the girls went to wash their hands, and then it was time to sit down to supper.

Susie felt strange and awkward as she slid into her chair at the white-covered table, which seemed to her very elegant and beautiful. There were flowers in a glass vase; and there were stiff white napkins; and

two forks at each place, and two spoons. The little girl was glad that nobody seemed to be watching her. She did the best that she could with her knife and forks and spoons, and was thankful that she did not spill or break anything. The food was so good that she would have liked a little more; but she shook her head when Mr. Bolton asked her to have a second helping.

'Oh, do, dear,' put in Mrs. Bolton, trying to encourage the shy little girl. Susie shook her head again, too much embarrassed to pass her plate or let the 'Martha-woman' pass it; but she was grateful for the word *dear*, which was one she seldom heard, and she was happy because the girls had asked her to stay for supper.

When everybody rose from the table, the girls went into the sitting-room to listen to the music on the radio. It seemed queer to Susie not to have to help with the kitchen work.

'Don't you girls have to wash dishes?' she managed to ask.

'Sometimes we help with 'em,' said Eleanor; 'but to-night we don't have to.'

Susie did not care much for the music, and she was glad when Beatrice said, 'Come on out on the porch and I'll read to you.'

'Oo-oo!' Susie hopped with joy. If there was anything that she loved, it was being read to. There was a hammock-swing on the porch, with plenty of

cushions on it. The two girls snuggled into the swing, while Eleanor went upstairs with her mother. The book was 'The Moving House,' by Mrs. Mackie. To Susie it was an amazing story. It seemed wonderful that the little house should have been moved right into a fairy circle, so that strange creatures came and went at night. Beatrice read well, and made all the words as clear as talking, so that Susie could understand every bit of it. She felt as if she could sit and listen forever.

Beatrice read and read, until the dusk began to come down, and in the pond down by the road, the frogs began to sing. Mrs. Bolton called from within the house, 'It's getting too dark to read, Bee.'

'Yes, Mama.' Beatrice closed the book in the middle of a sentence. She looked smilingly at Susie. 'I'll read you the rest some other time,' she said.

Susie drew a long breath. 'Oh, it was lovely,' she said. 'Thank you, thank you for reading.' She jumped out of the swing. 'I must go home,' she said quickly. 'Pop-pa told me not to stay late.'

'El and I will walk down to the bridge with you,' Beatrice replied.

Eleanor came out of the sitting-room. The three girls walked around the house, and found Martha sitting on the back porch.

'We're going home with Susie,' Eleanor remarked.

'I'll walk along with you,' said Martha. 'It's getting rather dark.'

So she went with them to the bridge, and waited till Susie called 'Hoo-hoo,' from the kitchen door. The walk through the dusk was pleasant, because the stars were coming out, and the bats were flitting, and the stream was chattering and rippling, and some sort of flower was spreading a sweet scent in the air.

Herman was smoking on the steps, and his pipe made a harsh smell which drove away the odor of the flowers. He did not say anything as Susie stepped past him to go inside. Her mother was setting bread to rise.

'Well, you're kind o' late,' she said. 'Did you have a good time, my Susie?' She was always pleased when the Bolton girls paid any attention to Susie.

'Oh, the best time!' Susie would have liked to tell every little thing that had happened — all about the green-and-silver lake; and the peanut butter sandwiches, and the flowers on the dining-room table, and the story of 'The Moving House'; — but her mother was too busy to listen. And so Susie had to whisper it to her kitten, as she gave him his milk for the night. 'Oh, I had the best time,' she whispered into his little black ears.

Susie did not get to church very often. She had to stay at home and look after Karl and Bertha. Her father would not go unless her mother went, and Susie could not (or would not) go alone. Martha, up

at the Big House, had said to Susie, 'Some Sunday when your mother isn't going to church, I'll take you with me.'

'Oh, will you?' cried Susie. She wanted to go, and yet she was frightened, too, about going among so many people.

Now, on Saturday morning, when Susie went for the milk, Martha called to her from the back porch, 'I'll take you to church to-morrow, if you can go.'

'I'd like to go,' said Susie, 'and I'll ask Mom and see what she says.'

'Come up here about ten, or a quarter after,' said Martha.

'All right,' called Susie, excited at the thought of going somewhere with big, solid, kind, dependable Martha.

Mrs. Siegefried was willing that Susie should go. 'You have your nice clothes, too,' she said in a pleasant tone. 'And you'll have to wear a hat, you know. It's good you have such a fine one.'

'Oh, how glad I am that my hair is cut off,' sighed Susie, looking at herself in the glass. She was always so thankful that she did not have to go around with pigtails tied up in red ribbons. 'The hat is just right this way,' she added.

In truth, her soft fine flaxen hair, waving a little under the attractive white hat, looked as nice as any girl's hair needed to look. The wreath of pink and blue flowers on the hat was so pretty that she wanted

to keep turning around so that she could see it in the glass.

'It's cool enough so you can wear your cape,' said her mother.

In her freshly ironed pongee dress, her short stockings and brown shoes, and her hat and cape, Susie looked as trim and well-dressed as Beatrice or Eleanor or any of their friends. She had to stand in a chair to see all of herself in the mirror — that is, to see the hem of her skirt and her feet and legs, which she could not see when she stood on the floor. How she had changed since she had come to the farm! Then she looked queer and old-fashioned (even if her mother would not admit that she did); now she looked just like anybody else.

Long before ten, she set out for the Big House, carefully picking her way so that she might not soil her shoes. She had to sit on the back porch quite a while to wait for Martha. It seemed that Mr. and Mrs. Bolton and the girls had gone in the car to the town where the girls went to school; and they would attend church there and not get home for dinner. Henry, the hired man, took Martha and Susie in the old Ford. Susie was sorry that none of the Boltons could see how nice she looked.

The church was a small box-like building with a short tower. A loud bell was sounding when Henry and Martha and Susie arrived. People were standing on the steps or going in, or getting out of cars or

horse-drawn buggies. The men were sunburned, and looked uncomfortable in their white collars. The women were plump and pink-faced or thin and tired-looking. Most of them wore black or a kind of ginger-cooky brown. One pretty youngish woman in a light blue dress had a baby with her — about as old as Bertha. The baby had a little white bonnet with lace and bows, and a white coat, and a fluffy blue blanket. When it kicked its little feet, Susie could see its tiny white wool bootees with blue ties. She could not keep her eyes off the little creature. How she wished that Bertha could be dressed like that! Bertha was just as sweet and pretty as this baby. 'When I get some money, I'll buy some lovely things for her,' thought Susie, imagining herself grown up and rich. She forgot that Bertha would not be a baby very long.

Susie sat still beside Martha, in a seat toward the back of the church. She dared not look around very much, but when everybody stood up to sing, she could glance about and see what people looked like and what they were wearing. It was cool and solemn in the church, and there was a faint smell of talcum powder and perfume. It was nice, Susie thought, and she wished she could come oftener to the services. She liked to hear the Bible read in the big voice of the preacher. She did not understand much of what he read, but there was something about the lilies of the field, and she thought of the yellow lilies which grew

and blossomed behind the Little House. What he read about the birds of the air made her think of the yellow finches which she had seen flying among the reeds at Marl Lake. There was a long prayer, when people put their heads down, and some even covered their eyes. The beautiful baby was asleep, with its head against its pretty mother's shoulder. The mother had to sit still when people rose to sing, and strangely enough, the baby slept right through the noise.

The sermon was not so dreadfully long as Susie had expected. It was about being good and not being afraid that God couldn't take care of you. Susie listened to a great deal of it and thought she would remember it a long time; but her mind kept straying off to the Little House, and the Big House, and Beatrice and Eleanor, and the kitten Blinky. She was relieved when the sermon was over, and the interesting ceremony of taking up the collection began. Oldish men with stiff white collars and red-brown sunburned hands passed green velvet bags on the ends of long sticks. Susie waited anxiously for the man on her aisle to come for her five cents, which she had held in her hand since she came into the church. Nearer and nearer he came. At last the green bag was poked right in front of her, almost surprising her in spite of her waiting. She fumbled at her five-cent piece, nearly dropped it, and then threw it into the bag in a scared way, blushing pink as she did so. The grayish

man looked solemn, but a little girl across the aisle smiled at Susie, and Susie smiled back. Martha smiled, too, as if she thought Susie rather funny. The pretty baby had waked up, and was patting its mother's face with its little soft hands. Susie wished again that Bertha could have a white bonnet trimmed with lace.

Susie liked the singing, but she was really glad when the end of the service had come. She pushed out shyly, feeling small and helpless as people crowded against her in the aisle. The minister stood near the door, shaking hands with people. Susie, looking up, could see his chin, smooth and blue with recent shaving.

'Who is this little girl?' he said to Martha.

'Her name is Susie. Her father has the sugarbeets for Mr. Bolton,' answered Martha.

'Oh, yes! How do you do, Susie? Come again,' said the minister.

Susie blushed and wondered what to say. She found that she did not need to say anything, for the minister was already shaking hands with some one else.

Susie rode home feeling free and happy and well-dressed. Going to church was pleasant, and she would like to go every Sunday. When she ran across the bridge again, looking out for her best shoes, lest they get soiled, she was eager to see little Bertha, and tell her about the baby that was good in church. Her mother had the dinner nearly ready, and the white

tablecloth was on the table, and there were the silver-plated knives and forks, too, which the Siegefrieds didn't use every day; and the blue glass salt cellars which had belonged to Grandma, and the best pitcher with the pink roses on it. Bertha was tied into the big chair. She lifted up her arms and cooed when she caught sight of Susie.

'Sweetie!' said Sister, making a dash to kiss the baby's cheek. 'Oh! I just love church,' Susie told her mother, as she took off the hat with the flower-wreath. 'I'm going to go every time I can!'

CHAPTER XI

ICE CREAM AND STRAWBERRIES

The lovely days of June were slipping away. The forenoons were always busy; for Susie had to care for Bertha while her mother did the housework. When Bertha was asleep, Susie had to help with the bed-making and the dishwashing and the potato-paring. She had to pull weeds in the garden, too, and bring in chips to start the fire, and do a dozen other things which might or might not be the same every day.

But there were usually a few hours in the afternoon when Susie might do as she liked. She could wander along the bank of the brook with Karl, or alone, watching the fish, or throwing twigs and bits of board into the current; hunting empty white snail shells; dabbling her bare feet in the swift water, while she sang to herself and thought about stories which Beatrice read aloud. Three or four times a week she went up to the Big House, and sat on the porch while Beatrice read to her out of books which she brought from the Library in town. And so Susie had many stories to think about, and many questions to answer in her own mind. The free afternoon hours were full of thoughts, gay ones or puzzled ones, which rose in her mind after the sessions of reading with Beatrice.

One day, after she had been thinking a good deal,

she found her mother in the vegetable garden, behind the house, working away on her knees among the cabbage-plants.

'It's funny, isn't it, Mom,' she said, 'that you put little bits of seeds into the ground — they almost all look alike — and some come up carrots, and some tomatoes, and some cabbages? It's awful funny ——' She tried to make her mother feel the wonder of it.

'I don't see anything funny about it,' answered her mother. 'If you plant cabbage seeds, why shouldn't they turn into cabbages? And if you plant carrot seeds, you expect carrots, don't you?'

'I know — but — how can little seeds make plants and flowers and things to eat?' Susie's forehead was puckered with her thinking. 'And how does a seed know enough to turn into a carrot? Why doesn't it decide to turn into something else?' The little girl's cheeks grew red with the excitement of the thought.

Her mother frowned. 'You talk silly,' she said almost crossly. 'Cabbage seeds make cabbages — that's all there is to it.'

Susie did not say anything more. She felt foolish and ashamed because she could not make her mother understand what she meant. There was more to the matter of seeds than she could say in words. It seemed so wonderful to put seeds into the ground, and then have them come up into plants, and have the plants bring out flowers or more seeds or something to eat. But she did not dare speak about these

things to her mother. Perhaps Beatrice would understand — surely Beatrice's mother would; but Susie would never dare to talk about such things to *her*. Susie dug her bare toe into the ground, and kept still.

Mrs. Siegefried looked troubled. 'Here,' she said suddenly, reaching into a pocket in her skirt, 'here's ten cents. You take Karl and walk up to the store and buy you each an ice cream cone.'

Susie gave a jump and a squeal. She hardly ever had any money; and ice cream cones did not often fall into her hands. She took the little piece of silver, with a loud 'Thank you, Mom-ma'; and ran shouting for Karl, who was playing steam-engine on the other side of the house. 'Ice cream cones!' she called to him.

He came running and tooting, with his shoulders back and his stomach out. 'See! See! I'm an engine,' he cried. 'Where's the ice cream cone?'

'We're going after it.' Susie took Karl by the hand and dragged him along, as she hurried out to the road. Settling into a fast walk, they went on up the road through which they had so often gone to school. They had to pass the schoolhouse on their way to the store. There stood the little white building, its windows covered with heavy shutters. Weeds were growing up around the steps. It looked sad and forgotten. 'I'll be so glad when we can go back again,' said Susie to Karl, who only sniffed and stared.

Soon they came to the store, a low white building with a narrow porch at the front. It seemed cool inside, and there was a pleasant mixture of smells, reminding one of coffee and dried fish and pop and apples and onions and cheese. Mr. Warner, the owner, stood behind the counter weighing out sugar for Allie Sykes's mother.

'How do you do, Susie?' said Mrs. Sykes. She had seen Susie at the school picnic. 'You must come over and see Allie some time.'

'Yes, ma'am, I'd like to,' answered Susie. She had seen Allie only once since school was out, when they had met on the road to the store.

Mrs. Sykes took her sugar and went out to get into her high old-fashioned Ford car, which stood near the porch.

'Well, what's yours?' asked Mr. Warner, brushing some sugar off the counter.

'Ice cream cones,' said Susie proudly, but in a thin shy voice.

'Hi! Hi! I scream!' cried Karl, stamping on the floor.

'We just have vanilla to-day,' said Mr. Warner, taking the cover off a can down under the counter. 'That all right?'

'Uh-huh,' shouted Karl before Susie could get out her polite 'Yes, sir.' All flavors were the same to Karl.

'You don't get in very often for cones,' said Mr.

Warner, a red-cheeked man, with dark twinkling eyes. 'I guess I'll have to give you a good big helping, now that you're here.'

How good that was of Mr. Warner! He piled the thick frozen cream up as high as it would go on each of the cones. He handed them over the counter, brown and crisp and dripping with delicious overflowing drops of cream.

'Thank you,' said Susie gratefully, giving him the little warm silver dime which she had been holding in her hand.

'*Danke*,' muttered Karl in German. In a second he was sliding his tongue over the cold sweetness of the cone.

'Come on outside.' Susie pulled at him with her free hand. Karl, with his head down, followed her to the porch. They sat down on the steps and ate their ice cream with the delight of children who do not have many 'treats' of good things. Susie made hers last as long as she could, just as she had done at the school picnic; but Karl gobbled his down, to the very last bit of brown cone, and licked his fingers, and looked so longingly at Susie's that she had to give him the tip end of her cone, with a big piece of the frozen cream still in it.

'I wish we could have 'em every day,' sighed Susie, fishing in her pocket for a handkerchief.

'Wish we could have 'em all the time,' mumbled Karl.

'Pretty good, eh?' smiled Mr. Warner, sticking his head out of the door.

'Yes, sir,' answered Susie.

'Y' bet,' cried Karl, grinning.

'We got to go home,' said Susie. 'Come on, Karl.'

'Wait. Here's something for you.' Mr. Warner turned away and then came back. Into the sticky hands of the children he put a few peanuts and two or three rose-pink candies. 'To eat on the way home,' he said.

'So nice,' murmured Susie, pulling at Karl to start him on the way home. She was thinking that she would find some way to earn a little money, and then she could buy an ice cream cone every little while for Karl and herself. Perhaps she could even buy one for Beatrice and Eleanor. She trotted home happily, watching for birds and flowers, and hurrying past the deserted schoolhouse. Back at home she ran to find her kitty, and forgot about the question of cabbage seeds and their queer way of growing up into cabbages instead of beets.

A few days after the ice cream treat, when Susie went up to the Big House for milk, Beatrice called to her from the porch, 'Susie, we had strawberries for supper last night. Mother says your folks can have a mess to-day, if you or your mother can pick 'em.'

'All right. Thank you.' Susie's words did not express the joy which the little girl felt in thinking

about the strawberries which would be coming on now for several weeks.

'You'll probably have to hunt for enough to make two or three saucerfuls,' said Beatrice; 'but in a few days more there'll be scads of them.'

'Shall I pick just enough for us — now?' asked Susie. She did not want to appear greedy; but she wanted to be sure to get the berries as soon as she could.

'Yes, to-day — this morning,' answered Beatrice. 'Can you come back after breakfast?'

'I've had my breakfast,' said Susie.

'Oh! Well, then, why don't you take a little basin from here, and pick enough to surprise your mother?'

'I'd like to,' answered Susie. 'If I could do it fast enough so she wouldn't get mad because I was gone too long.'

'I'll help you. I won't eat my breakfast till we're through.'

Beatrice ran into the house for the basin, and the two girls scampered to the strawberry patch nearest the house. There were glimpses of red under the leaves. As Beatrice had said, they had to run here and there to get enough of the berries to fill the basin.

The first ripe berry that Susie found went into her mouth.

'Oh, how good!' she cried. Beatrice was eating one, too.

'I'm not going to eat any more,' said Susie. 'I'll

hurry and get home and surprise my Mom.' The fingers of the girls flew, as the red berries were pulled from their hiding places and popped into the pan. Some of the berries were not so ripe as they might have been, but they were snatched and dropped into the basin just the same. Soon there were enough so that each of the Siegefrieds could have a taste.

'There!' said Beatrice. 'That's all, I guess. And there's just enough for everybody.'

Susie hurried home with her milkpail in one hand and the basin of berries in the other. Her arms were tired by the time she reached the kitchen door.

'See, Mom, see!' Susie burst in triumphantly with her prize.

Mrs. Siegefried had been ready to scold, because the milk was so late in arriving; now she beamed and nodded at the sight of the berries, and praised her Susie for a 'smart girl.' The first strawberries were always something to be excited about, and Susie thought these particularly good because they were a surprise. How the family did enjoy them, and how proud the little berry-picker felt as her father and mother and Karl ate the somewhat scanty helpings of the fruit which she had brought for them!

The next day Eleanor said to Susie, 'Papa's going to give us five cents a box for picking the strawberries — only he isn't going to let us work too hard or pick too many in a day. Wouldn't you like to pick, too?'

Susie felt her heart leap. Here was just the chance which she had been waiting for. She could earn some money. She could buy ice cream cones; she could make each of the girls a present! She ran home as fast as she could go.

'Oh, Mom!' she cried, 'I can earn five cents a basket! Eleanor says her Pop-pa will give us five cents a basket. I dast pick the strawberries, dasn't I?'

'Why, your father talked with Mr. Bolton yesterday, and we're going to pick on the shares,' said Mrs. Siegefried, wiping her hands on the roller towel.

'On the shares!' Susie's heart went down. That meant that whenever she picked any berries, her mother would have some of them to use on the table or to can. But not a cent went into Susie's pocket. 'Oh, dear!' the little girl could not keep the tears out of her eyes.

'But think how nice it is to have the berries to eat, and how nice to have strawberry jam,' said her mother. She said *yam* this time, instead of *jam*. Sometimes she could not pronounce the *j* correctly.

'Yes, it's nice,' Susie agreed. She *did* love the shortcake and the jam, and the big dishes of berries and cream. 'But, oh, Mom! I wanted to earn some money. Oh, I wanted to earn five cents a box!'

'Well, you can't, as I can see,' responded her mother. 'We want the berries, and they make us such good things to eat. You like 'em as well as anybody.'

'Yes, but I wanted to earn some *money*,' quavered Susie. 'I wanted to — to buy some things.'

'You have what you need,' said her mother '— a good place to stay and plenty to eat. Lots of girls don't have so good.'

'Yes, it's all right,' said Susie; 'but I wanted ——'

'You shouldn't keep wanting something all the time,' said her mother. 'But if you've got your heart set on it, then you can pick a little sometimes for money.'

'Oh, can I, Mom?' Susie had been drooping with distress, but now she lifted her head with new hope. 'How much can I pick for myself?'

'I don't know. A little sometimes.' Mrs. Siegefried went back to her dishwashing, and Susie ran upstairs to make her bed, feeling happy and unhappy at the same time.

The sun was warm and the weather was clear, and the strawberries ripened faster than Mr. Bolton expected. In a day or two Susie was told that she might begin to pick.

Early in the forenoon, she went out to the strawberry bed. Beatrice and Eleanor were there in their oldest clothes, each holding a little square box or quart basket.

'Hoo! hoo!' called Eleanor. 'All ready to begin?'

'Yes. Oh, how thick they are!' Susie was surprised to see what quantities of ripe fruit were growing on the thick green plants.

'Eat all you want,' said Mr. Bolton, coming up just then. 'My girls have had about all they can stand.'

'I *think* I can eat just bushels,' laughed Beatrice; 'but after I've had a few, I don't want any more. See how many you can eat, Susie.'

'I got to pick real fast,' said Susie. But she found time to gobble a good many of the big luscious berries, too. It was hot, hard work, leaning over or kneeling on the ground, and pulling the berries carefully off the vines, one by one. For an hour Susie thought she could bear it. Beatrice and Eleanor were working steadily, saying less and less as the sun grew hotter and hotter, and as their arms and backs grew more and more tired. The baskets began to fill more slowly. Susie found herself reaching for the bigger berries, which would fill the boxes faster, and letting the smaller ones go. 'Oh, I mustn't do that,' she thought, looking around quickly to see whether anyone had noticed. Beatrice was pushing her hair away from her eyes with a slow motion, and Eleanor was biting a huge berry in two, holding it up in her stained and sticky fingers.

'Whew!' cried Eleanor as she finished the strawberry. 'I'm just being fried here in the sun. Let's go into the shade for a minute.'

Susie was glad to go and sit down under a maple tree and fan herself with a rhubarb leaf. Her face was hot and red; and little beads of sweat kept forming on her upper lip and on her nose.

'Oh, it's so hot!' groaned Beatrice, who usually took everything calmly. 'I've a good notion to tell Papa that I just can't stand it.' Susie felt like saying the same thing.

'You don't want to be a quitter, do you?' said Eleanor. 'Oh, look! Here comes Martha. What do you suppose she has?'

Martha, with a wide straw hat on, and a pitcher in her hand, was coming down the path from the house.

'Oh! oh! Something to drink — something *cold*,' shouted Eleanor. Now they saw that Martha was bringing three tin cups, as well as the pitcher.

'What is it?' called Beatrice. 'Tell us, Marthy.'

'You'll see.' Martha came plodding on. She was 'heavy on her feet,' and her motions were slow but effective. The girls jumped up when she came near.

'Hear the ice tinkle!' exclaimed Eleanor. Susie thought that she had never heard such a pleasant sound.

Martha poured out a cupful of liquid from the pitcher. 'Susie first,' said Beatrice. 'I guess she's the hottest and tiredest.'

Susie took the cold dripping cup.

'Lemonade?' asked Eleanor thirstily.

'Yes, with cherry juice in it,' answered Martha.

'Um,' said Eleanor blissfully.

Susie sipped with delight, while Martha poured out the refreshing drink for the other two girls.

Martha stood smiling, with the pitcher in her hand. 'A little at a time is better than a lot at once,' she warned them. 'Wait a little before you drink any more.'

'Oh, Martha! Just a swig,' begged Eleanor, her gray eyes dancing. She could usually wheedle Martha into anything.

'No. Wait a few minutes.' Martha set the pitcher down in the shade, and picked a handful of berries.

'Meany,' pouted Eleanor, though she was laughing, too.

The three girls sat down and fanned themselves again. It was not long till Martha let them empty the pitcher.

'Thanks! Thanks!' they cried. They felt cooler and readier to work. They went back to the picking with a little more strength and willingness.

Susie could not help thinking how fine it would be if she could be earning five cents a box, as the other girls were. 'All this hard work just to make jam!' she muttered. And yet she felt ashamed of herself, because she really wanted her father and mother and Karl to have some good jam to eat, and she knew that no one would like it better than she would.

The forenoon was long and wearisome. Every time that Susie picked four boxes, she might pick one for herself — or for her family, rather. She emptied her boxes into a pail, and began over again. 'I'll try to keep on as long as Bee and Eleanor do,' she thought.

'Papa! I've picked all I can,' called Eleanor after a while.

Mr. Bolton, counting and packing and picking, stood up and looked at her. 'All right,' he said. 'Your face is like a crimson peony. Don't tire yourselves out. Susie, haven't you worked enough, too?'

'I — I guess so,' faltered Susie. 'I feel awful tired.'

'You go on home,' said Mr. Bolton. 'You don't have to work too hard, just to get berries for your family. Here.' He emptied an extra box into her pail. 'You run along and rest yourself.'

Susie stood, hardly knowing what to say. She managed to stammer a word or two.

'Come on and sit on the porch,' said Beatrice.

Susie shook her head. She didn't want her mother to think that she was working when she wasn't. She took her pail and went home. Her mother looked into the pail with a disappointed expression. 'You didn't get such a lot, did you?' she said.

'I worked *hard*. It was so hot I nearly baked,' said Susie wretchedly.

'What's a little *hot?*' answered her mother. 'This afternoon I go and pick, myself. You stay with Bertha and Karl.'

Susie was glad that she didn't have to pick in the hot sun, but sorry that she couldn't be with the other girls.

'But I want to pick some time for money,' she reminded her mother.

'Well, you can, a little while this afternoon, if you think it's cool enough.'

Susie had to content herself with staying at home with the children. But about four o'clock, when her mother came home, she went back to the strawberry beds and earned fifteen cents, picking just for herself.

CHAPTER XII

AN APPLE AND A PEAR

THE next day things were about the same, and Susie earned fifteen cents more. She began to feel almost rich. In her mind were a dozen plans for using the money. First and foremost, she wanted to do something for Beatrice and Eleanor because they had been good to her.

On the third day of the picking, Mrs. Siegefried stayed at home to make the berries into jam, lest they 'spoil on her,' as she said. At the same time she was doing her cooking for the end of the week.

'Susie,' she said, 'while Bertha's asleep you run up to the store and get me a can o' baking-powder. I forgot I didn't have any.'

Susie did not want to go alone. 'Can I take Karl?' she said.

'No. I'm in a hurry. Karl's too slow. You run on — and take a penny with you for something you like.'

Susie dashed away, hurrying up the road, partly out of fear and partly out of the desire to bring the baking-powder with all haste. The empty schoolhouse gave her a shaky feeling as she ran past it. 'What can it do to me?' she thought. 'There's nothing to be afraid of.' She made herself walk more

slowly, although she had a queer feeling, up and down her back.

At the store, she bought her baking-powder from Mr. Warner. Then she looked into the glass show-case, to see what she should buy with her extra penny.

'How about these?' Mr. Warner showed her some chocolate-covered bits of molasses taffy. 'I can give you three for a cent,' he said.

'I guess I'd like that. Susie took the tiny paper bag, screwed at the top, with the candy in it. She lingered to look a little more. Ah! In the other show-case were a muddled lot of articles left over from the Christmas season, six months before. 'If I could only buy some of them, how nice it would be,' she said to herself. 'What are those things?' she asked, pointing through the glass.

'Those are pincushions,' said Mr. Warner. One was shaped like an apple and one like a pear, and they were colored so that they looked like the real fruit. Each had a little brown stem and a green leaf at the top. Susie thought that they were almost the prettiest things she had ever seen.

'How much are they?' She had a bold thought as she asked.

'I'll let you have 'em for ten cents apiece,' said Mr. Warner, smiling down over the glass showcase.

'I'd like 'em. If I can get money enough, I'll buy 'em.' Susie looked up with an eager anxious face. 'I hope they won't be gone!'

'I guess they'll keep all right,' answered Mr. Warner soothingly. 'Don't you worry. I shouldn't wonder if they'd be here when you get ready to buy 'em.'

'Oh, I think they're so pretty. I want to give 'em to somebody,' said Susie importantly.

'You can take 'em in your hand.' Mr. Warner lifted the apple and the pear out of the case. 'They're real nice. Somebody would like them, I haven't a doubt.'

Susie held the two cushions in her hands. They were smooth, like silk, and firm and plump. 'I like 'em awful well,' she murmured, fingering the stems and leaves. Then she remembered the baking-powder, and laid the apple and the pear down sharply on the showcase. 'I got to go,' she said. 'I hope I can buy 'em, though.'

How splendid it would be if she could get those two pincushions for the Bolton girls! She would work hard and earn enough money. She hurried home, not even thinking much about the schoolhouse and the shadowy woods. She did not forget to eat her chocolate-taffy; but she saved a piece for Karl, as she always did when she had a special treat. She gave the baking-powder to her mother, and ran to find Karl, so that he might have the warm and sticky piece of candy. She did not say anything about the pincushions, because she had an inner feeling that her mother would not like the idea of her buying them.

The next day, Saturday, after she had picked a

'I LIKE 'EM AWFUL WELL,' SHE MURMURED

long time 'on the shares,' she bent her tired little back over the rows, in order to earn more money, so that she could carry out her plan. It was not easy to fill a box when she was weary and warm.

When she brought her second 'pay-box' to Mr. Bolton, he looked down at her flushed and dirty face, and said, 'Look here, Susie, you don't need to tire yourself out. Take this and go and rest.' He pulled a silver quarter out of his pocket and held it out to her.

She drew back, shaking her head. 'Oh, no!' she said in a scared way. 'I don't want you to give it to me. I can pick enough. I got enough now, but I'll pick one or two more boxes.'

At noon she had fifty cents which she had earned herself.

'You'll get rich, my Susie,' said Mrs. Siegefried, as she looked at the little heap of coins in Susie's red-stained palm. Karl stared, and Bertha reached for the money and squealed.

'What you going to do with it?' asked her mother.

Susie felt guilty because she did not want to tell what she intended to do with her money. She was sure that her mother would not let her spend it as she wished. Mrs. Siegefried would want her to spend it for something useful — new stockings or gingham for an apron; or she would want her to save it for a long time.

That afternoon, with her money wrapped in a clean handkerchief, Susie slipped out and ran up the lane,

toward the Big House. Out under the last plum tree sat Karl, building a steam-engine out of tin cans and some old wheels off a toy wagon. Susie stopped. What should she do about Karl? She couldn't bear to leave him out of the little party which she had planned, and yet it would be a bother if she took him along, and he might tell more than she wanted him to.

'Where you goin'?' he asked in his hoarse little voice.

'Oh, somewhere,' answered Susie, trying to harden her heart. But when she thought how Karl liked everything good to eat, she gave in and took him by the arm. 'Come along, quick, Karl,' she said. 'We're going to have something nice. Hurry up.'

Wonderingly, Karl abandoned his engine, and trotted away with his sister. She had a strange look on her face, and she did not say a word as she pulled him along. When they came within sight of the Big House, she gave a gasp of relief. There were Beatrice and Eleanor, not picking berries, but dressed up and sitting under a big maple tree with some books.

Susie went on courageously until she came close to them. They looked up with friendly greetings. Susie felt her voice sticking in her throat. She clutched her money, and called out excitedly, 'Come on! Come on with me. I want you to go somewhere.'

The girls looked surprised. They had always been the ones to say, 'Come on.'

'Where do you want us to go?' asked Beatrice, laying down her book.

'Oh, somewhere.' Susie was red-cheeked and tremulous. She was afraid that the girls might hang back.

'We'll come,' said Eleanor, jumping up; 'but of course we'd like to know where we're going.' Beatrice was getting up also.

'To the store' — answered Susie; 'to Mr. Warner's.'

'What for?' Eleanor was wide-eyed and puzzled.

'Oh, for something,' replied Susie, too shy to say what she really wanted to say.

'All right, we'll go,' said Eleanor.

'It's a surprise,' explained Susie feebly.

Eleanor wanted to make Susie feel at ease. 'Come on, Bee. Let's go,' she said smilingly.

'How nice she is!' thought Susie in a dim sort of way. She loved both the girls, but Eleanor was perhaps a little dearer to her, because she was the younger, and because she always seemed so understanding.

They all walked out through the side of the yard, to the road. Susie was glad that the trees were thick, so that no one in the Little House could see them.

Beatrice and Eleanor ran races. 'To that white birch tree!' Eleanor would shout, and then away they would go.

'To that clump of ferns,' Beatrice would call out,

and then there was a rush and a scamper and a whoop of triumph. Susie, full of her plan, could only pant along, pulling at Karl, and trying to keep up, and hoping that everything would be all right.

Past the schoolhouse marched the procession. 'How *sad* it looks!' exclaimed Eleanor.

Now they were going up the steps of Mr. Warner's store. Susie felt her heart beating hard and fast. 'I want you to have some ice cream cones,' she said.

'Oh, no, Susie!' cried Beatrice, stopping at the door.

Susie was holding her precious bits of silver close in her fingers. 'Yes, I'm going to buy 'em,' she said firmly. 'I want to.'

'Oh, dear, Susie, you shouldn't do that,' protested Beatrice, looking uncomfortable. 'Why, you worked so hard to earn your money.'

'That's why I want to spend it this way,' answered Susie with tears in her eyes. 'I *want* to.'

'It's all right, Bee. She wants us to have them,' put in Eleanor, who could not bear to see Susie with such an unhappy face.

'Well ——' answered Beatrice.

They all went into the store. Karl was wondering but eager.

'Four ice cream cones,' said Susie in a loud voice.

At the same time that she was speaking, she was peeping out of the corner of her eye, at the glass showcase with the Christmas things in it. Yes, there

were the pincushions nestled together, as pretty as ever.

Mr. Warner looked astonished. He hardly knew what to do. 'Did you say you wanted four?' he asked Susie.

'Yes. Four,' answered Susie, beginning to feel proud and important.

Mr. Warner gravely dipped the cream from under the counter, and handed out the cones. The girls took theirs soberly, with a polite 'Thank you.' Karl gave a yell of delight when he received his portion. Susie counted out two dimes from her little handful of coins.

'Thank you,' said Mr. Warner solemnly. It was almost like church or Sunday School.

The three girls and Karl stood around, eating their cones.

'My! this is good,' said Eleanor, to show that she appreciated what Susie had done.

'Yes, it's fine,' Beatrice agreed.

'Yum, yum!' Karl smacked his lips.

Susie felt happy and miserable and shy and bold, all at the same time. She could not think of anything to say while the cones were being eaten.

When the last scrap and drop had disappeared, she pulled Beatrice by the sleeve.

'Come over here,' she said, leading her friend to the showcase. 'There!' She pointed to the pincushions. 'I want to make you a present. I'm going to get those for you girls ——'

'Oh, no, Susie!' cried both of the Bolton girls at once.

'Yes, I want to.' Susie was getting obstinate now. 'Which one will you have, Be-ah-triss? See how pretty they are.'

'But you mustn't buy them,' answered Beatrice, really distressed.

Mr. Warner took the two cushions out of the showcase, and held one on each of his big brown hands. He looked from one to the other.

'They're real nice,' he said earnestly.

Susie stood trembling. 'I'll take 'em both,' she said. 'Bee, you choose first.'

Beatrice looked at Eleanor. 'Susie shouldn't spend her money for us,' she wailed. 'Should she, El?'

Susie was in anguish now lest the girls should not take her gifts. 'I *want* to spend it for you,' she said, her lips quivering.

Eleanor patted Susie's shoulder. 'She wants us to have 'em. It will make her unhappy if we don't take 'em,' she said to her sister. 'She wants to *do* something for us.'

Susie was grateful that Eleanor understood. 'Uh-huh, I just *got to*,' she said, choking.

Mr. Warner still stood balancing the apple and the pear on his broad palms. Susie was glad that he didn't laugh.

'I'll *take* 'em,' she cried, stamping her foot. 'You'll have the apple, won't you, Bee?'

'Yes, I'll take the apple,' answered Beatrice.

'I like the pear the best, anyway,' remarked Eleanor, squeezing Susie's hand.

So Susie stood proud and excited and eager and a little scared, while Mr. Warner wrapped up the two cushions separately, and gave one to Beatrice and one to Eleanor. Susie gave him two more of the warm little dimes which she had been clutching in her handkerchief. She breathed a long sigh as she dropped them into Mr. Warner's outstretched hand. She had done what she wanted to do; she had earned some money; she had bought ice cream for her two friends; she had made them each a present.

'We're much obliged, Susie,' said Eleanor. Her kind glance said more than her words.

'It's awfully sweet of you,' said Beatrice.

'It's all right,' Susie replied, meaning, 'You're welcome.'

Karl licked his fingers, stuck out his chest, and said nothing. He had been in a state of silent happiness since he had received his cone.

Now the girls all ran home, skipping through the woods. Eleanor and Beatrice carried their pincushions carefully in their hands. Every little while they said how much they liked their presents. Beatrice said that she liked the apple best and Eleanor that she liked the pear best. This was fortunate, Susie thought; but of course they could have 'traded' if it had been the other way around.

She began to wonder whether she should tell her mother what she had done. Some time it would all come out. Her mother would ask about the money, and she would have to confess what she had done with it. She was *glad*, she said to herself. No matter what happened, she would be *glad* that she had done something to show her friends how much she liked them. She didn't want them to do something for her all the time. She wanted *to do something for them.*

Susie did not keep her secret long. She let Karl go back to his engine under the plum tree, while she stole in at the front door of the Little House, and ran quietly up the stairs. The smell of strawberry jam was in the house. Looking out of the window, Susie saw her mother going into the garden with a basket, to gather some peas for supper.

'I guess I better go an' help her,' she muttered. She went down into the garden, trying to look as if she had not been out of the house.

'Where you been?' asked her mother.

'Oh, just around,' answered Susie. 'Don't you want me to help you pick the peas?'

'Yes, I want help,' said her mother, bending over the pea vines. She and Susie picked peas for a few minutes in silence.

Susie could not think of anything to say. Looking up, she saw Karl coming, pulling his engine along by a string, with loud *toot-toots*. She wished that he would stay away.

'Hi! hi! Toot-toot!' shouted Karl as he came nearer. 'Mom! Mom!' he called, 'we had nice ice cream.'

'When did you have ice cream?' asked Mrs. Siegefried, straightening up from her stooping position.

Susie did not say anything, but bent lower over the pea vines.

'Oh, Mommy! Susie bought ice cream!' Karl went on in a loud voice. 'It was awful good.'

'Oh, dear!' thought Susie. 'If he'd only keep still.'

'When did Susie buy ice cream?' asked Mrs. Siegefried again. 'Susie, you been buying ice cream to-day?'

Susie bent still lower and said nothing.

'Awful good,' added Karl. 'All the girls had some.'

'What does he mean?' asked Mrs. Siegefried. 'You been buying things at the store?' She went over and took Susie by the shoulder.

Susie had to look up. She nodded and then looked down again. Her cheeks were flaming red, but she did not cry.

'What! You went and spent your money at the store?' her mother repeated. 'Who went with you?'

'Karl,' answered Susie faintly. 'And — and — Bee-ah-triss — and Eleanor.'

'And you bought for all?' asked her mother impatiently.

'Uh-huh,' Susie replied, keeping her lips closed.

'You buy anything else?'

There was a long pause. Karl started down between two rows of carrots, tooting and puffing. Susie could hardly make herself speak.

'I — I bought some pincushions,' she said at last.

'Pincushions!' Mrs. Siegefried gave Susie's shoulder a little shake. 'You don't mean you bought pincushions with your money?'

Susie looked up. 'Oh, Mom! They were so pretty!' she cried. 'They were just like an apple and a pear! You ought to see 'em!'

'You got 'em here?' asked her mother.

Susie shook her head. Her eyes filled with tears. Why did her mother need to be so cross, when all that a little girl had done was to make somebody else a little present?

'I gave 'em to Bee-ah-triss and Eleanor,' she confessed.

'You went an' spent your money for such things, without asking me? I got a notion to whip you, Susie, for acting like that,' said her mother angrily. 'You know better than that, Miss.'

'Well, but Momma,' began Susie, trying to make her mother listen, 'I wanted to *do* something for the girls — I wanted to *do* something for 'em.'

'You could do something else — different from that,' scolded her mother. 'You needn't go and buy ice cream and pincushions.'

'Well, what could I do?' inquired Susie, looking up with wet eyes at her mother's vexed face.

'Why, I don't know——' Mrs. Siegefried responded.

'They liked the pincushions,' pleaded Susie. 'They *said* so.'

'Folks say a lot more than they mean,' Mrs. Siegefried remarked.

Susie caught her breath. *Hadn't* the girls liked the pincushions? Had they just said they did, to please her? It was a dreadful thought. She felt as if she were going to burst out crying.

'One was like an apple, and one was like a pear,' she gasped.

'I can't have you go spend your money like that——' Mrs. Siegefried was saying.

Susie thought that she could not stand hearing any more. She was sure that she should cry or scream. She didn't mind so much if her mother wanted to whip her; but she could not bear to think that the girls might not have liked her present, or that she had done a dreadfully wrong thing in making some return to them for their kindness to her. For a long minute, she and her mother stood there, the one frightened and the other angry.

And just then something happened. The noise of a car shook the warm still air; and a big old Ford with a high top appeared between the trees. On it came along the grassy road which led to the highway.

'Why-y! There's Allie Sykes!' cried Susie, with a jump of joy.

And in truth there sat Allie, looking eager and pleased, and there sat her mother, driving, and nodding her head in a friendly way. Susie winked away her tears.

'Hello, Allie!' she called out. 'How did you come here?' It was a foolish question. She was so surprised that she did not know what she was saying.

Allie was waving her hand and answering, 'Hello, Susie! Aren't you surprised?'

Mrs. Sykes stopped the car, and she and Allie climbed out. Susie was glad indeed to see them; but still more glad that something had happened to stop her mother's scolding about the strawberry money which had been so rashly spent.

'Well, well! Come right in!' Mrs. Siegefried was saying, as she untied her soiled gingham apron and showed the clean white one beneath. Not many visitors came to the little house.

'We can't stay,' Mrs. Sykes was answering, though she followed Mrs. Siegefried into the kitchen. 'We just came to see if Susie could come and visit Allie.'

'Oh! Oh!' Susie could not help squealing aloud, in her relief and astonishment. 'Oh, Mom! Can I go?'

'To stay overnight?' asked her mother, pushing forward a chair for Mrs. Sykes. 'My Susie, she don't go out much that way.'

'Yes, I mean to stay overnight and to-morrow,'

Mrs. Sykes replied. 'Allie's real lonesome without her. She'd like Susie to come and visit her. We'll see that she's all right.'

Susie had taken hold of Allie's arm. 'Oh, I want to go!' she said with a choke in her voice.

'So do I want you to,' said Allie. She looked taller, Susie thought, than she had been when school was out; and she had a pretty new dress of green-and-white percale, clean and cool and stylish.

'Allie's terribly fond of Susie,' said Mrs. Sykes kindly.

'I feel like not letting her go,' said Mrs. Siegefried, looking angry again. 'She's gone and done something I don't like.'

Susie gulped and shivered. Was her mother going to keep her at home because of the misspent money?

'Well — children always make little mistakes,' said Mrs. Sykes, with her good-natured smile. 'I get real cross at Allie, every little while. But she's a well-meaning girl, and I just have to forgive and forget. I guess Susie's awful well-meaning, too.'

'Mm — yes, she is, I guess,' admitted Mrs. Siegefried. 'She's a good girl most of the time.'

'Then you'll have to forgive her for this little slip, won't you?' said Mrs. Sykes. 'I don't know what it is, but it can't be very bad.' She folded her hands in her lap, and smiled at the two girls, who were standing with their arms around each other.

Mrs. Siegefried sighed. 'I guess I have to,' she said

rather unwillingly. 'Maybe you saved her a whipping when you came. Susie, you want to visit Allie?'

'Oh, Mom! 'Course I do,' cried Susie, with an appealing note in her voice. 'I want to just awful.'

'Well, then, I guess you'll have to,' her mother answered. 'You go get the little satchel in my clothes closet, and put in what you need.'

Susie rushed off to get the satchel, and then she had to drag Allie upstairs and show her her room while the needed articles were being jammed into the bag. 'My! You got a nice room,' commented Allie. 'You got a lovely bedspread an' everything.'

Susie was proud that she had a nice room to show.

Mrs. Sykes called up the stairway, 'Take your good clothes, Susie. We might go to church. Your mother says to take them along.'

Susie and Allie folded the 'best' clothes carefully, and laid them neatly on the top of the less important things which had gone into the bag. It was more exciting than ever, thought Susie, when one took one's Sunday clothes on a trip.

The girls hurried downstairs to find the kitten and fondle him and tell him good-bye. Bertha woke up, hearing unfamiliar voices, and she had to be petted and kissed. Then all at once, Susie was climbing into the big car with Allie and Mrs. Sykes. She felt proud to go on a visit. Somebody wanted her. Somebody had even come in a car to get her. She was going to stay all night, like a grown-up person.

'I'm awful glad you could come,' Allie was saying.

'I am, too,' echoed Mrs. Sykes. 'It'll do you good to have a change.'

CHAPTER XIII

BUSTER AND THE SYKESES

To Susie, the big, old-fashioned, loose-jointed car was a beautiful chariot, carrying her through a fairyland of sunshiny fields and green-shaded bowers. The ride was all too short. She could have gone on for hours. Never had she had a long enough ride in an automobile.

It was fun, though, to go to a place which she had never seen before, and to be treated like 'company'; and to have different things to eat, and be free from all the demands of home.

Allie lived in a comfortable white cottage, with wings at the two sides and the back; so that there was a good deal of room in it. It had good furniture and quite a lot of looking-glasses and pictures hanging on the walls. It was, Susie dimly decided, much nicer than the Siegefrieds' house, and not so nice as the Boltons'.

Susie had to meet Burton, Allie's older brother. He went to school in the village, it seemed — not the large town of Lowden, where the Bolton girls attended school. He was fourteen, a big, solid boy with blue eyes and ruddy cheeks. Susie was shy with him at first, but soon felt at ease; because he was so lively and friendly, and because Allie seemed to like him so

well. He and Allie showed Susie all around the house and barn and sheds, so that she might see the horses and colts and pigs and chickens and dogs and cats and kittens. Then there was supper in the cool dining-room. Mr. Sykes, a jolly ruddy-faced man who looked like Burton, came in from the field and washed himself and sat down at the table, making jokes and teasing the children, and laughing a great deal. In a few minutes Susie felt so comfortable that she could eat all she wanted, and dared to take a second helping of the green peas and the strawberry shortcake.

After supper, she and Allie wiped the dishes, and then they strolled out to the porch on the other side from the kitchen, and sat down. They were making 'squawkers' of blades of grass, when Burton came around the corner of the house.

'Say,' he said to Susie, his eyes shining, 'don't you want to ride horseback?'

Susie sat staring. She had never thought about riding horseback. Did she want to ride on a horse? She thought not.

'I don't know,' she stammered, feeling pleased and scared.

'Sure, she does. It's heaps of fun.' Allie jumped up, much excited. 'Burton, you get Buster and let Susie ride. She'll just love it.'

'I — I don't know ——' Susie tried to say something about being scared, but Allie kept repeating how much fun it was to ride. Susie thought that Mrs.

Sykes ought to be consulted; but somehow no words seemed to come. She sat stupidly while Burton brought a tall roan horse around to the grass plot in front of the porch.

The sight of the horse loosened the tongue of the younger girl. 'I guess I don't want to ride,' she said in a husky voice.

'Oh, yes, you *do!*' cried Allie earnestly. 'Why, you ought to learn. It's grand.'

'Sure you want to,' added Burton encouragingly.

Susie hung back; but goaded by the two others, she let herself be persuaded. In a sort of daze, she watched while Allie brought a hard-seated chair from the house, and Burton held the horse by the bridle. Then Allie held the horse — 'nice Buster,' she called him — while Burton helped Susie to mount.

Susie had not the slightest idea how to get on the back of the big beast. She stood limply on the chair, smiling vaguely, while Burton half pushed and half lifted her, till somehow or other she found herself on the horse's back.

'Quiet, now, Buster,' said Burton to the horse, which had begun to step around restlessly. Burton gave the horse's flank a gentle slap. 'Just hang on to the bridle and keep still,' he said to Susie, 'and you'll be all right.'

Susie glanced down. It seemed a long way to the ground. She must have looked frightened; for Allie called out, 'Don't be scared, Susie. You're doing fine.'

Fine! Susie hadn't done anything yet but hang on to the bridle. She was too much frightened to move. The horse was moving, though; pressing forward beyond Burton and the chair. He ambled across the grassplot and on toward the gate. Susie heard Mrs. Sykes saying in a shrill voice, 'For the land's sake, is that young one on a *horse?*'

Now Susie knew that she should not have done as Burton and Allie had told her to do. She should not have let them make her think that she could ride. Oh, dear! Now the horse was going forward, faster than ever. She could feel him moving like a big machine.

'Oh, Allie,' she screamed out, 'I want to get off.'

'No, you don't,' returned Allie scornfully. 'You'll like it. Just keep on riding.'

Susie, turning her head quickly, could see Mrs. Sykes standing in the door, holding a corner of her apron nervously in her fingers. She was saying, 'Burton, what did you put that child on that horse for?'

'She wanted me to, Ma,' answered Burton. 'Or, anyway, she said she would — that is ——'

Mrs. Sykes was not listening. 'You go and get her off,' she said firmly.

Burton hesitated. 'She's all right, Ma,' he said. But the horse was walking faster and faster.

'You don't know ——' Susie heard Mrs. Sykes saying.

The horse had gone out at the gate now. Susie,

cringing and clinging, gave herself up for lost. She was half crying, and her breath was coming in gasps. Just then a car came spinning down the road, and went whizzing and whirring past. Susie caught sight of flitting faces, and heard exclamations and laughter. The horse had jumped aside and then quickened his steps. Burton was calling, 'Whoa, whoa, whoa!'

Now a dog appeared out of nowhere — a middle-sized dog with a red mouth, and white teeth showing. '*Woof! woof! woof!*' said the dog. '*Woof, woof!*'

'Hey, there, Susie,' called Burton. 'Don't go any farther.'

The horse, harassed by the dog, pushed on jerkily, edging to one side of the road and then the other. '*Woof! woof!*' barked the dog. Burton came running and shouting, 'Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!'

Susie was terrified almost beyond endurance. Her heart was beating wildly. She felt herself slipping. Allie screamed, 'Hold on! Hold on!'

But it was of no use to try to cling. The horse shied into the underbrush. Clutching at his mane — for the bridle had slipped from her hands — Susie slid over his rounded back and plunged down into the bushes.

She felt herself crashing into the hazel brush. The dark bulk of the horse swayed above her, and a big white hoof grazed her shoulder. She could not scream nor make any sound above a whimper.

Now the horse was gone, and she was lying among

the bushes, and Burton and Allie were running toward her. She could hear their footsteps and their cries. Burton leaned over her and began pulling at her arms.

'Are you hurt, Susie?' he was saying. 'Are you all right?'

Susie could only whine and gasp. She struggled to raise herself, kicking her feet among the hazel sprouts.

'Oh! oh!' The voice was Allie's. 'Are you hurt? Are you killed?'

Susie struggled up, with the aid of Burton. She was beginning to sob, and hot tears were dripping down her cheeks. She could see Allie, standing near; and Mrs. Sykes running with long awkward strides, and panting, 'For the land's sake!'

It took Susie a few minutes to be sure that she wasn't hurt. Mrs. Sykes was feeling of her arms and legs, and Allie was smoothing her hair and patting her hand.

She just stood up and cried, with loud gurgles and gasps.

'There, there, Susie, I don't believe you're hurt,' Mrs. Sykes consoled her. 'You slid off so easy-like, you aren't really more than scratched. Come, come. Don't cry!'

Slowly it dawned on Susie that she was not really injured. She couldn't feel a pain anywhere, though there was a smear of blood on her hand. She stopped crying, and stood wiping her eyes with her sleeve.

'I'm awfully sorry,' Burton was saying.

'You shouldn't have put her on the horse,' scolded Mrs. Sykes. 'You know that she don't have any one to rampage around with, as Allie does.'

'I'm sorry,' Burton repeated, looking very downcast. 'I got to go an' find Buster.' He ran off, to bring the horse home.

'Come, child. You're all right.' Mrs. Sykes took hold of Susie's arm, with gentle encouragement. 'We'll go back to the house.'

So Susie walked to the house, still feeling somewhat surprised, as she went along, that her legs and arms were not disabled. 'Sit down here on the porch,' Mrs. Sykes went on. 'It's real hot, and you're all flustered up.' She smoothed the little girl's hair, and straightened the folds of her dress. 'I declare, you've torn your stocking. That's a pity, but we can fix that up all right.'

Susie was beginning to feel almost like a heroine, except for her worry as to what her mother would say about the stocking.

'You rode a little way, anyhow,' commented Allie. 'I'm glad you did that much.'

'I'll get a damp cloth.' Mrs. Sykes wiped Susie's face and hands. There was a streak or two of blood from a scratch, and there was plenty of dust to be removed. 'Now what you need is a nice drink o' lemonade.' The cool drink was brought, and Susie sat refreshed and subdued while the others chattered

around her, telling what they had thought and how glad they were that she had escaped being hurt. Burton had found Buster and had had some trouble in catching the horse and bringing him back.

'My! a horse is awful high, isn't he?' said Susie wonderingly.

'Yes, he does seem so when you're perched up on top of him,' said Mrs. Sykes. 'What children need to start with, is a pony. That don't seem so high.'

'We learned on a pony,' said Allie. 'But that was at Grandpa's.'

'I guess I'd be scared, even on a pony,' said Susie.

'Oh, no, you wouldn't,' put in Burton, who had tied Buster into his stall, and was back on the porch again. 'You'll get over being scared; you'll want to ride. Come on. Don't let's sit around. Let's go in swimming in the pond.'

'For the land's sake,' cried Mrs. Sykes. 'Don't get into any more trouble.'

'Aw, don't worry, Ma,' answered Burton. 'We'll be careful.'

'I'll have to watch you, to make sure,' laughed Mrs. Sykes. 'Go and get ready. It's late, and you can't stay in long.'

There was a scrambling for bathing suits. Susie was given a homemade one, patched together out of several kinds of flannel — dark blue, and checked brown-and-white, and bright red. It looked well enough to her, and she wore it with pride.

The pond was down beyond the apple orchard, a shallow little body of water, fed by a small stream winding among the meadows. The three children waded out into the cool dark water, while Mr. Sykes wandered down to the grassy shore, and had to be told, in a shrill chorus, all about the adventure with Buster. He merely laughed.

'It wasn't the horse's fault,' he said. 'It makes a horse nervous when some strange, scared person is on his back. And he didn't know what you wanted of him. Now go on with your play, for you'll soon have to come out.'

The dusk was falling, and the frogs in the marsh were croaking, and a bat or two sped aimlessly through the air. Burton and Allie and Susie splashed and wallowed about, and pushed and threatened one another, and squealed and giggled and hallooed, as boys and girls in bathing have done since the year one. Susie was afraid of appearing like a 'fraid cat,' and so she shouted rather louder than she wanted to, and splashed a little more rampantly. She was tired, and glad to come out when Mrs. Sykes called, 'Now that's enough, children.' They all came out dripping, and chased one another among the apple trees, before they went to the house. They did not put on their shoes and stockings, but sat around indoors by lamplight, and looked at some magazines; and each had a cup of milk and a sandwich by way of refreshment.

'Time for bed!' cried Mrs. Sykes, when the clock

sounded half-past eight. 'Come on, girls.' Burton was allowed to stay up an hour longer.

Susie climbed the stairs behind Mrs. Sykes and Allie. Suddenly she felt oddly lonesome and distressed.

'I wish I could see Blinky and Bertha,' she faltered.

'If your folks had a telephone, you could call up,' said Mrs. Sykes sympathetically.

How Susie wished that her parents had a telephone! She had never thought about the matter before. She had never spoken over a telephone. It was hard, not to have a car or a telephone, she thought. It was hard to be different from other people. 'When I get big and *earn* some money, we'll have everything,' she said to herself, as she had done before.

Susie and Allie were to sleep in the 'front chamber,' with two beds in it — a comfortable homey place. There were white ruffled curtains, rag rugs, a shiny oak dresser with an oval looking-glass, and a table covered with a red cloth. The two beds, which were covered with blue-and-white patchwork quilts, just alike, were turned down, ready to be slept in. A candle burned on the table, where there were some magazines and a work-basket. Mrs. Sykes bustled about, putting down window-shades, hanging up Allie's clothes, and talking cheerfully to the girls.

Susie, sitting on the edge of her bed in her night-

gown, was suddenly more homesick than ever. The continued chorus of the frogs made her feel queer, and she thought that she could not bear to have the light blown out.

'I want my kitty. I want my Blinky,' she said plaintively.

'Now, now, you're all right,' said Mrs. Sykes hurriedly, as if she were afraid that she was going to have a homesick girl on her hands.

'We'll be asleep in a jiffy,' piped up Miss Allie. 'So don't get blue, Susie.'

A knock sounded at the door, a rather loud knock but an uncertain one. Mrs. Sykes went to the door. Burton's voice was heard from the hall. Mrs. Sykes came back with something in her hand.

'Well, I declare!' she said. 'Here's Susie getting a present at this hour of the night. What do you think of that?'

'What is it?' Susie and Allie rushed to see what she was holding, for the light was dim.

'Burton's treasure-box. He's giving it to Susie, because he's sorry she fell off the horse. He said maybe it was his fault,' Mrs. Sykes was saying. 'It's real pretty. I wonder he could give it up.'

She put the box into Susie's hands. It was smaller than a cigar box, but it was about the same shape, and had a lid. It was covered with shells, laid on flat in some kind of paste, so that they fitted closely together and entirely covered the top and sides of the box; ex-

cept that in the lid there was a square of looking-glass set round with tiny snail shells. Susie was amazed that there could be such a beautiful box.

'Oh, it's the *loveliest*,' she cried, holding it up to look at the little mirror in the top. 'Oh, is it mine? I just *love* it.' She lifted the lid. The box was lined with blue paper, sprinkled with little gilt flowers.

'One of Burton's cousins that came from the East brought it to him. They got it at the seashore,' Mrs. Sykes explained. 'Burton's always loved it, and kept his stamps in it that he collected, and other choice things.'

'Maybe I shouldn't take it,' said Susie, looking up at Mrs. Sykes. 'Maybe it's too nice for me.' But she thought that she could never give it up.

'Oh, no, no! It isn't too nice for you,' cried Allie, shaking Susie kindly by the shoulder. 'You're to keep it.'

'Of course you are,' said Mrs. Sykes. 'He wants you to have it. I guess he's a pretty big boy for it, anyhow. You keep it, Susie.'

Susie hugged it up close. 'It's just beautiful,' she said. 'Oh, I think it's so good of Burton to give it to me.' She could imagine how pretty it would look, sitting on her dresser, with the pink teapot, and maybe a glass with flowers in it. She did not feel shaky or homesick any more.

'Come, now, I'm going to blow out the candle,' said Mrs. Sykes. 'You girls get into bed.'

Susie and Allie jumped into their beds. Susie took her box with her and laid it beside her pillow on the far side of the bed, where she could touch it, but not roll against it. Mrs. Sykes kissed Allie good-night, and then she came over and kissed Susie. It made Susie happy to have Mrs. Sykes kiss her. Mrs. Siegefried hardly ever bothered to come upstairs when Susie went to bed. She was too busy with her housework and the other children. When Susie drifted off to sleep, after a little chattering with Allie, her mind was full of her adventures, of the trip in the car, and her attempt at horseback-riding, and the good time that she had had 'in swimming,' and the delight of having a present so beautiful as the shell box.

The next day her misfortune with the horse had faded a little, so that she felt like a heroine, especially at breakfast, where the family marveled that she had not been hurt. It was Sunday morning. Susie and Allie wiped the dishes and made their beds, and fed the chickens and dogs and cats and little pigs. Then they washed themselves and got ready to go to church. Susie was glad that she had her 'good' clothes with her.

'You look so nice in that pongee dress,' said Mrs. Sykes. 'You have some real pretty things.'

Allie looked nice, too, in a thin pink dress and short white stockings and white shoes.

Susie felt pleased when Mrs. Sykes said, 'We can go

to your church this morning. We usually go to Milford'— the village where Burton went to school.

So Susie saw Martha, and the pretty baby, and a few other people whom she recognized. She liked going to church, and felt pleased to see how all the people looked at the row of strangers — Mr. and Mrs. Sykes and Burton and Allie.

Back at home, Allie and Susie set the dinner table, which was arranged on the screened back porch. How Susie loved eating out of doors. 'I wish *we* could ever eat on a porch,' she said. But of course the Siegefrieds had no porch large enough to eat on. Again there was plenty of delicious food, and Susie felt happier than she had felt even at the Big House, for she was almost as much at ease as she was at home. After the dinner dishes were done, the children took a walk around the pond and through the fields, while the older people sat on the porch. Susie had thanked Burton in the morning for her beautiful box, and now she spoke about it again.

'It seems just too nice to give away,' she said.

'Ho! It isn't either,' said Burton. 'I *wanted* you to have it.'

Susie remembered how she had *wanted* Eleanor and Beatrice to have the pincushions, and so she understood.

'Thank you for wanting me to have it,' she said.

After the early supper, Susie had to go home. She was eager to go, and yet she longed to stay. But

when she arrived at the Little House, hugging her shell box, she had put away in her mind a happy remembrance which would always give her a heart-leap of joy when she thought about it.

CHAPTER XIV

HURRYING DAYS

THAT same evening, just after Susie came home from the Sykeses, she went out into the shed, to get a saucer from which the kitten had drunk his milk. There she saw her father's hammer and plane and other tools, and some smooth new boards, which had been cut and shaped so that they looked as if they might be intended for a seat of some kind. The floor was strewn with curly yellow shavings.

Back in the kitchen, Susie said to her mother, 'What's Pop-pa making in the shed?'

Herman had not come back yet from the Big House, where he was helping with the milking.

Mrs. Siegefried answered in a pleased way, 'He's making a *bank* — what you call it in English? — a bench, for Mrs. Bolton — a kind of long seat to sit on, you know.'

Susie considered. 'Did she ask him to?' she said.

'No,' her mother answered. 'He heard her say, when he was fixing the screen door the other day, that she wished she had a nice bench or such a thing, to put on the back porch, where Martha and the others could sit. And so, when he comes home, he says, "Anna, I'm going to make a bench-thing for Mrs. Bolton. All the folks up there at the Big House have

been good to Susie," he says, "and they've been good to the rest of us, too."'

'Oh, I'm so glad,' said Susie joyfully, 'that he's making something for the girls' mother. Wasn't it fine that he thought about it?'

'He got some boards from Mr. Warner — good new boards — and just after you left he come home with 'em, and he's making the seat just as good as he knows how. He's going to paint it some nice color,' Mrs. Siegefried explained. She looked like a plump excited girl as she told her story. She smiled happily and her cheeks glowed.

'I said we ought to do something for them!' cried Susie, 'and I tried to.'

'Yes, I know. I missed you, my Susie, while you were gone,' said Mrs. Siegefried, 'and I got to thinking about the pincushions; and I guess you were right to buy them and give them to the girls. You wanted to be nice to them. The only thing is, I don't like to have you do things that I don't know about.'

'I won't do it again,' spoke up Susie. 'I shouldn't do it, I know. But ——'

'You were scared I wouldn't let you,' said Mrs. Siegefried. 'Maybe I wouldn't — then. But now I see it was right to do. And your father is going to make the bench, and I'm going to make a big fine cake, like the kind you took to the picnic ——'

'Oh, Mom! Honest?' Susie jumped with delight.

'Yes, of course. And for the girls I'm going to make

some of those *pfeffer-kuchen*, those spice-nuts that we have at Christmas, you know. My mother used to make 'em for us when we were little.'

'They're so good,' cried Susie. 'It'll be like Christmas, with all those presents. When'll they be ready?'

'Right away, this week, just as soon as we can get them done,' said Mrs. Siegefried, looking as eager as Susie.

'Oh, how nice!' Susie threw her arms around her mother, as she did when she felt especially pleased and grateful.

'Here, let me kiss you, my Susie,' said Anna Siegefried. 'You're *gemütlich*, and we learn from you.'

She kissed her little daughter on the cheek. Susie gasped with astonishment and pleasure. Her mother's kiss was dearer to her than the one which Mrs. Sykes had given her.

'It's like Mrs. Sykes says,' Mrs. Siegefried was going on. 'We have to kind of forget what the children do that we don't like.'

Susie stood close against her mother's chair. Well, she hadn't done so wrong, after all, in making her present to Beatrice and Eleanor, and her mother hadn't stayed angry. Things had turned out surprisingly well.

It was a thrilling day when the beautiful new bench was finished and painted and ready to take up to the Big House. One noon, Mr. Siegefried brought the

bench into the front room, and all the family sat around and admired it.

'It's strong on its legs,' said Mrs. Siegefried earnestly.

'And it's such a nice green color,' said Susie.

'I painted it just the color of the shutters on the house,' Herman explained for the third time. 'I thought that would look real good.'

Karl ran his hand over the bench. '*Ach! Schön!*' he said. 'Awful nice.' Karl would mix his German and English, in spite of all that Susie could do.

'Oh, I think it's just beautiful,' sang out Susie. 'I know Mrs. Bolton will just love it, too. I know she will.'

'Now, Anna,' said Herman, who, it was plain to be seen, was proud of his gift, 'soon as you get your cake made, we can take it up to her.'

'To-day I make it,' announced Mrs. Siegefried, rising from her chair. 'Just before supper, we'll go up there, and give 'em everything.'

The afternoon was a busy one, with the sound of the egg-beater echoing through the house, and the smell of spices floating everywhere. Susie scurried around, doing what she could to help her mother, and taking care of Bertha, and making herself generally useful. When the big cake was finished, Susie thought it even more wonderful than the one she had taken to the picnic.

After Herman came from his work, everybody was washed and dressed in his or her best clothes.

'We've got to go before Bertha gets to sleep,' said Mrs. Siegefried, 'because nobody wants to stay at home.'

At last the procession started from the Little House. Here was Herman, stumping along at the front, carrying the heavy green bench on his shoulders. Next came Mrs. Siegefried with Bertha in her arms. Then came Susie, bearing the wonderful cake in a big tin pan, covered with a clean dish-towel. And behind the rest trotted Karl, with the spice-nuts carefully tied up in a pasteboard box. They all had to walk slowly, because they all had such precious things to carry. It seemed longer than usual from the Little House to the Big House. Up the lane, past the maple trees, and over the clattering bridge, walked the procession. As they came near the house, Martha spied them from the back door. She ran out on the porch.

'My goodness,' she said, 'it seems queer to see you coming all at once; and all loaded down, too.'

Mr. Siegefried put his bench down carefully on the ground. 'We want to see Mrs. Bolton,' he said soberly.

One could see that he felt as excited as anybody, but he spoke quietly, as if the Siegefrieds were in the habit of bringing presents to the Boltons every day.

Mrs. Bolton came out quickly. She looked young

and pretty, in a thin blue dress with a soft frilly white collar.

'How do you do?' she said in her friendly way. 'Why, how nice to have you all come to see us.'

Beatrice and Eleanor were hovering in the doorway.

'We brought something,' said Herman, making a kind of bow. He did not wear any hat, and so he could not take one off. 'For you,' he added. Herman was not one to do much talking.

'For me!' cried Mrs. Bolton, who was really very much surprised. 'How kind of you! Do you mean that you're giving me this bench?'

'Yes, ma'am,' said Herman, his blue eyes sparkling with pleasure. 'I made it for you.'

'To put on the porch,' explained Mrs. Siegefried proudly. She knew that Herman had made a very good bench.

'It's exactly what I wanted!' exclaimed Mrs. Bolton, looking down at the bench and clasping her hands. Herman stood smiling.

'He heard you say you wanted such a thing,' put in Mrs. Siegefried.

'I did. I wanted one ever so much. And this is lovely.' Mrs. Bolton spoke in such a way that the Siegefrieds knew she meant every word. 'It's perfectly splendid, and I thank you a thousand times for it. I can't tell you how kind I think it is for you to make it and bring it to me.'

Herman lingered beside his bench, blinking with

pleasure. Everybody stood looking and admiring. Beatrice and Eleanor came up behind their mother, exclaiming and chattering.

Susie was tired and her arms ached. She pushed up beside her mother and whispered, 'Mom, tell 'em about the cake.'

'Here's a cake I baked for you,' said Mrs. Siegefried, motioning toward Susie and her clumsy burden. Little Bertha peeped over her mother's shoulder and laughed at Susie, with a soft baby-chuckle. 'I says if Herman is giving you something,' Mrs. Siegefried was going on, 'I'm going to give you something, too. You've all been so good to Susie and the rest of us that we wanted to do a little something for you. We can't do much, but we can try to do a little.'

'We like Susie,' said Mrs. Bolton, 'and it's a pleasure to do what we can for her. It's splendid of you to bring me a cake. I heard about the delicious one that you sent to the school picnic.'

Susie handed the cake up the steps, and Mrs. Bolton peeped under the dish-towel, exclaiming, 'How perfectly wonderful it looks!'

'It should be eaten right off,' Mrs. Siegefried warned her, 'or the cream will sour. It's almost too warm weather to make a cream cake.'

'We'll have it for supper,' agreed Mrs. Bolton.

'Oh, how *grand!*' cried Beatrice and Eleanor. 'Mmm — we can hardly wait.'

'Now, Karl ——' said Mrs. Siegefried, as if she were

putting on an entertainment. Karl had been hanging back, kicking at the ground, and swinging his free arm with embarrassment.

'You give the girls the box you brought,' his mother commanded him. 'We couldn't leave them out,' she said, smiling at the sisters.

Karl took the box up the steps to Beatrice, who opened it quickly. 'Oh! Little cakes!' she shouted, putting her hand into the box. 'Little sugary cakes! What are they?'

'They're the hard spice-nuts (*pfeffer-kuchen*, we call them), that we always used to make for children.' Mrs. Siegefried flushed with happy embarrassment as she told about her cookery. 'I liked them when I was a little girl.'

Everybody was talking at once, now, and Susie felt quite bewildered. She could hear Mrs. Bolton saying, 'What a *beautiful* lot of gifts!' and her mother answering '— so good to Susie,' and Eleanor murmuring as she gobbled a spice-nut, 'Better than candy!'

Martha took the big cake into the house. Eleanor and Beatrice passed the little cakes around, and Susie ate one, although she had had some at home.

'Sit down, all of you,' said Mrs. Bolton. 'Let me take the baby. Mrs. Siegefried, you sit on the new bench with me.' Just then Mr. Bolton came out on the porch, and he had to hear all about the gifts, and there was a great deal more of the friendly chatter and gabble.

When things were quieter again, Mr. Bolton said, 'Well, Herman, I think we're going to do pretty well on the beets. They're showing up splendidly, it seems to me.'

'Yes, they're all right so far, this year,' answered Herman. 'You'll make quite a lot out of 'em.'

'And you'll get quite a little sum, too, when they're all out of the ground,' said Mr. Bolton. 'You're earning your living here as you go along, with what you do for me; and your beet-money will all be clear gain.'

'Yes, that's fine,' Herman replied, 'if I get a job right away, when I go back to the city. If I don't get one, it eats the money all up, waiting.'

'Susie, here, wishes we didn't have to go back,' said Mrs. Siegefried.

Susie looked up appealingly at Mrs. Bolton.

'We'd like to have you stay, Little Girl,' said the lady softly.

'Would you like to stay, you and Herman?' asked Mr. Bolton of Susie's mother.

'Well, yes, I'd kind of like to,' hesitated Mrs. Siegefried: 'that is, if there was something for Herman to do.'

'Of course you've got Henry and Oscar to work for you, and you don't need any one else in the winter,' put in Herman quickly, so that no one would think that he was asking for a job.

'I can't turn the other fellows off. They've been with me for three years now,' said Mr. Bolton, looking

somewhat uncomfortable. 'As you say, the winter work isn't so very heavy. I don't just see, Herman, how I could ——'

'It's all right. We can go back to the city. We expect to,' said Herman.

'But we're glad we came here,' said Mrs. Siegefried shyly. 'It's the best place we've ever had.'

'We're glad, too, that we have the right kind of people in the Little House,' said Mr. Bolton. 'You're sober and honest, Herman, and you're a good worker. It's a relief not to have any bad actions, and to know that the work is going along steadily all the time. And Mrs. Siegefried keeps the house so clean, and everything in good shape. I tell you, we appreciate it.'

'And it's fine to have nice well-behaved children around, too,' put in Mrs. Bolton, 'that our children can associate with.'

Susie was so delighted to hear such praises of the Siegefried family, that she felt like shouting and singing. She saw that her mother and her father were proud and happy, too. They kept saying, 'Thank you — thank you — you're so kind ——'

'Well, we must be going,' said Mrs. Siegefried at last. 'It's past supper time.' She and Herman rose to go. 'I got my supper all ready, though,' she added, to show how good a housekeeper she was.

'So many thanks for the lovely bench,' said Mrs. Bolton, 'and I know we'll find the cake delicious.'

After more good-byes and more talking all at once,

the Siegefrieds went home with swelling hearts, satisfied with what they had done, and liking the Boltons more than ever.

'They were awful pleased,' muttered Herman, who was rather surprised at his own boldness.

'Yes, they were all so pleased,' echoed his wife.

'Oh, Pop-pa, can't we stay here?' asked Susie, who could not help feeling sorry in the midst of the family rejoicing.

'No, it looks as if we couldn't,' answered Herman. 'Didn't you hear him say there wasn't any place for us?'

'I wish, I wish we could,' sighed Susie, as the Siegefrieds plodded home to their belated supper.

The summer was going now, at a rapid rate. Susie picked more strawberries, and her mother canned a good many. Susie earned a little more money, too, from her own picking.

'Here, Mom-ma, you take it,' she said. 'I don't want to spend it wrong this time.'

'No. You keep it, my Susie,' answered her mother. 'I want you should have it. Let's not talk any more about pincushions.'

But Susie did not spend the money. She put it into her shell box, and let it lie there a long time. It was pleasant to know that she had some money which she could spend if she chose.

During July, her father was busy with the beets.

He went through them with a horse-drawn cultivator; and he and his wife hoed them twice by hand — a hard job when the sun was hot. Susie could not do that sort of work, and in her heart she was glad that she could escape it; but she had to take care of the baby, as usual, and work in the house while her mother hoed. It took a long time to get the beets clear of weeds, and her mother and father were tired out when the task was done. The beets grew higher and broader, so that their great red-veined leaves spread across the rows, almost covering the black soil beneath.

Though the Siegefrieds worked hard, quite a number of pleasant things happened, which made life seem worth while to Susie.

One day, Mr. and Mrs. Bolton took the three girls in the car, and drove to Lowden, the large town where Beatrice and Eleanor went to school. Of course they were having their vacation then; but Mr. Bolton drove past the schoolhouse, so that Susie could see what it was like.

'My! It looks nice!' cried Susie.

It was a long, new, red-brick building, with many windows. It looked spacious and clean and bright.

'We love it,' said Eleanor; 'and we've always liked our teachers.'

Susie had a happy thought. 'I guess your teachers have always liked you,' she murmured.

'Well said,' Mr. Bolton laughed.

'You're awfully polite, Susie,' said Eleanor, looking pleased.

Now they came to the busy part of the town. Susie had lived in a city, but she hardly ever got 'down town'; so that it was a great sight to her when they passed the big stores with their handsome windows, and the Court House with the clock in the tower, and other tall imposing buildings. Susie liked to look at the well-dressed people hurrying along the streets, the women and girls in light-colored frocks, and the men in white or cream-colored suits.

Mr. Bolton had some errands to do; and so they had to stop at several different places. Eleanor and Beatrice hopped out, and bought picture postcards. They gave Susie two, with stamps on them. In the big cool post office, the girls all wrote the messages and addresses on their cards, and sent them off. Susie sent one to Allie Sykes, and one to Luisa Ringeltaube, who had been her best friend before the Siegefrieds came to Mr. Bolton's farm.

When they came out of the post office, Mr. Bolton said, 'Here, girls. Here's something for each of you. Now go and be reckless.' He laughed as he gave them each fifteen cents.

'Oh, thanks, thanks!' The girls rushed off to the ten-cent store. Susie had not been in a big store for a long time. She felt bewildered, and could hardly see anything, because there was so much to see. She followed the other girls around almost blindly.

Eleanor bought some pale pink paper, and envelopes. Susie had very few friends to write to, and so she did not need note paper.

'Ah!' said Beatrice, 'there's something that would look nice on you, Susie.'

Susie gazed eagerly at the short string of small blue beads which Beatrice was holding. 'Oh! I like that!' she said. She had never bought anything of that sort for herself. She took the beads into her hands. How smooth and cool they were! She held them up against her neck, and looked at herself in the mirror on the counter. The beads were a kind of dull-blue in color, but they were of bright sparkling glass.

'They're just awfully pretty,' said Beatrice. 'You'll love 'em, Susie.'

'I do love 'em,' answered Susie. 'I guess I'll take 'em.' She felt proud to be able to decide so quickly.

The girl behind the counter smiled at her, and put the beads into a little brown bag. 'Ten cents,' said the girl. Susie gave her a dime.

She had five cents left. She must take something to Karl. She bought some yellow candy which looked like grains of corn. The girl gave her quite a few grains for five cents.

Mr. Bolton drove back through the Park, and along the River Road. Susie felt as if she were floating on air. When she showed her mother the beads, she was afraid of a scolding, or at least an impatient look, meaning that she had wasted her money.

But Mrs. Siegefried merely said, 'They're *schön*. They look nice on you, my Susie.'

The little girl wore them for an hour or so, glancing often at herself in the glass; then she laid them in her shell box, to keep for 'best.'

On another day, the Boltons took Susie and Karl for a long ride and a picnic supper. Mrs. Siegefried insisted on sending a pie which she had baked for Sunday, and a bowl of cottage cheese, rich with cream. Susie was glad that she could take something to the picnic, just as other people did, and she was pleased as a peacock when Mrs. Bolton praised the pie and the cheese.

Another day (a Sunday), some people whom the Siegefrieds had known in the city came to see them. They were sugarbeet people, too. The man, Mr. Kramer, had bought a Ford, and so he could drive the twenty miles and bring his family to see their old friends. How wonderful to have a car that would take people around like that! Susie felt shy of the Kramers, because she had not seen them for several months. But she soon made friends with Olga, who was two years older than herself, and Emma, a year younger. They all ran about, and played, and climbed trees, and waded in the brook, and clumped back and forth on the bridge, to hear the boards rattle. There was a big dinner in the kitchen of the Little House, eaten amid a gabble of German and English.

'Mom has been lonesome, I suppose,' thought Susie vaguely. 'She doesn't have much fun — she doesn't have any.'

With a sort of surprise, Susie began to realize how hard her father and mother worked, and how little pleasure they seemed to have, except what they got out of their own small home.

The Kramers took Mr. and Mrs. Siegefried and Karl and Bertha for a ride in the car. The three girls stayed at home. Susie showed the Kramer girls her room.

'My! It's an awful pretty room, isn't it?' said Olga. 'You got curtains, and a nice bedcover, and a rug, an' everything. Your house is so nice, too. Ours is awful bad. It's all dark-colored and fallen-in looking.'

'Yes, our house is lovely,' Susie agreed. 'That's because Mr. Bolton is so good. He likes to have folks clean and sort of — of — happy, you know.'

Susie was tired when the Kramers went, but she felt pleased and contented. It seemed good to have some one really come to see them — some one who cared where they lived, and would come twenty miles to find the place. She wished that her father and mother could get into a car of their own and ride around the country to see other people. Again came the thought, 'When I get old enough, I'll work and earn money, so we can have things.' Another thought came, 'If I were only a boy!' But she corrected that

by remembering that a good many girls and women could earn money. 'Look at Martha,' she said to herself; 'and there must be a lot more.'

In August, Eleanor and Beatrice went away with their mother for a three weeks' visit with some relatives. Susie thought that she could never stand having them away. They came down the night before they went, and brought some picture papers and some candy and a pair of shoes as presents for Susie, and two or three books which they wanted to lend her. They both kissed Susie on the cheek, and said, 'Good-bye, Susie. It won't be long.'

Susie felt downhearted that night and the next day. But after all, the time went fast, and it was pleasant to have the mailman stop with letters and cards from Beatrice and Eleanor.

One evening, after supper, the Siegefrieds all went out to the field to look at the beets. There they were, a sea of big crisp spreading leaves, dark and strong and perfect.

'It won't be long now till we'll be done with them,' said Susie's father, who was holding little Bertha. 'Then we'll have to take our money and go.'

Susie felt a pang of fear. 'Oh, dear! I don't want to go,' she said, almost crying.

'It's quite a while yet,' said her mother. 'Don't begin to fret, time enough to think about it when you have to.'

Susie tried not to think about going away from the

Bolton farm. There were many other things to claim her attention. Allie Sykes came over several times to see her, and once she was taken over to Allie's for supper. And one day the school teacher, Miss Hart, drove right into the yard and up to the side door, in her sister's car. School would begin in September, and the teacher had come over to her district to look up a new boarding place and to see some of her pupils. Susie was glad to see her. Miss Hart came into the house for a few minutes, and ate a piece of huckleberry pie and drank some milk.

'I knew you were a good cook, Mrs. Siegefried,' she said. 'I remember that wonderful cake that the children brought to the school picnic.'

Mrs. Siegefried blushed like a young girl. '*Ach!* It wasn't much,' she said. But Susie knew that her mother was pleased; and the little girl was glad that she could be in school a little while, before it was time to return to the city.

Presently Beatrice and Eleanor were back at the farm, with some cheerful tales to tell of their adventures. They invited Susie up for supper, and how good it seemed to be with them again, and to hear Beatrice reading aloud from a new book that she had brought from her aunt's!

The summer was over now, and autumn had begun. Apples were getting ripe. The smell of jam and pickles and catsup was in the air. Susie cut up apples, and picked grapes off the stems, and stirred marma-

lade, and washed jelly glasses — and scraped the sweet remainder of numerous preserving kettles. School began the second week in September. Susie was happier than she ever supposed that she could be, to see all the boys and girls again. Nobody thought of calling her 'Dutchy' or 'Pigtails' now, or of making fun of her dress or her hair. She looked just like any of the younger girls, except that her clothes were better than those which some girls wore. The teacher began reading stories again, and Susie sat entranced during the period when the reading was going on. It was beautiful to know that there were so many books in the world, which one could read and read and read, as one grew older and knew better how to find them.

Two weeks of school flew by like the wind. Then the talk of going back to the city sounded more often in the Little House. With a sinking heart, Susie realized that she must soon make a place for herself in a crowded city schoolroom, where the air was heavy and bad-smelling, and the teacher was overworked and impatient.

'*Must* we go?' she said piteously to her mother. 'Must we go, Mom? I wish we didn't have to leave this nice house. Can't we stay? Can't we?'

'No. I don't see how we can,' answered Mrs. Siegefried slowly. 'Mr. Bolton has Henry and the Swede man. They have been with him two-three years. You know he don't need so much help in the winter.

No, I guess we got to go back. Your Poppa can get a job in the box factory again.'

'Oh, I *wish* we could stay,' groaned Susie. 'What'll I do with my Blinky-Cat?'

'I don't know. You'll have to leave him, I suppose. We can't very well take him along; and we can't have him in a little place — just a few rooms upstairs, with no yard or anything.'

'Oh, I *can't* leave him!' Susie snatched up the black-and-white cat, now no more a tiny kitten, and held him so hard against her shoulder that he gave a squeak of surprise. 'Do I have to, Mom-ma?'

'We'll see.' Mrs. Siegefried looked worried and depressed.

The Field Man came that day. 'The beets are ready to lift,' he announced.

'Now comes the big job,' said Susie's father. The large machine, like a plow, was brought out of the shed. Susie was to stay out of school and take care of Bertha, so that her mother could work in the field. She would have to help, too, as much as she could while Bertha was asleep. It seemed to Susie that she could not give up those days out of the few which remained before she had to go away entirely. But now the beets were more important than anything else. The morning was cold and dull when the harvesting began. Mrs. Siegefried put on an old coat of her husband's, and tied a little gray woolen shawl over her head. Susie wore a heavy red sweater, which

had been Eleanor's, and a knitted cap. Karl and Bertha were both asleep when their father and mother and Susie started for the field.

Mr. Siegefried went up to the stable, to bring the horses which were to draw the lifting machine. Soon he was driving the horses; and the big dirty beets were being tossed up out of the ground in long earth-colored rows. Susie and Mrs. Siegefried followed with knives, cutting off the leafy tops and throwing the beets into piles. Mrs. Siegefried was as strong as a man. She worked like a machine, cutting and slashing as if she could go on forever. Susie could only saw away at the tough tops and throw the beets clumsily into the piles, holding her knife out sidewise like a sword. As she looked down the rows, she thought, as she had done before, that they were almost endless. When she had come to the Little House, it had seemed as if it would be years before the tiny seeds had sprouted in the black earth, and grown up into plants and made great red roots for themselves, which had to be taken up and carried away. Now the five months had gone, and the harvest was here, and the time had come to leave the Little House and go back to the city.

The beets were lumpy and heavy (at least for Susie); and lifting and throwing them required constant use of arms and shoulders. An hour went by. 'Oh, I'm so tired,' wailed Susie, hurrying on behind her mother. The wind blew harshly around her legs,

and her hands were black and wet and cold. She thought that she must ask her mother to let her rest. Just then she saw Karl come out of the house and wave his hands.

'Mom-ma, Bertha's awake,' called Susie. 'I guess I'd better go, hadn't I?'

'Yes, you better. Hurry,' answered Mrs. Siegefried, over her shoulder. 'Maybe Bertha's crying.'

Susie trotted back to the house. She shivered with cold and nervousness as she stumbled along. She was glad to get in out of the wind. Blinky ran to rub his head around her ankles. Karl was awkwardly tying his shoe laces. Bertha was crying mournfully in her crib. Susie pulled off her sweater, and ran to soothe the baby, lifting the little thing up in her arms. Bertha was nearly a year old now, a fat, sturdy child, with a pretty dimpled face. She cuddled against Susie's shoulder, and crowed, and said, '*Da-da!*' which her sister proudly thought must mean 'Susie.'

'Be a good baby, and I'll dress you nicie,' said the older girl. 'Karl, you wash your face good an' clean, and tie your shoe-strings better.'

Nagging at Karl, Susie took off the baby's night clothes and put on a clean chambray dress. She fed Bertha, and brought out bread and milk and oatmeal for Karl. Susie hurried about, washing dishes and putting away cooking utensils, making things neat, and keeping up the fire in the kitchen stove. Karl started off to school with the Nelsons. Susie

could not help crying because she had to stay at home.

She wiped her eyes and played a while with Bertha. Then she tied the child into the armchair, took the ashes out of the front of the stove, and swept the floor. It was quiet and warm in the kitchen, and Susie sat down to rest her arms and think about school. She was sorry when her mother came into the house.

'My! You've cleaned things up nice,' said Mrs. Siegefried, unpinning her little gray head-shawl. 'I'll take care of Baby now, and get some cooking done. You can go out and work. You take your father some milk and cookies.'

Susie put on her sweater and took the bag and the jar which her mother had prepared. She dreaded going out. The wind whipped her clothes about her, and cut through the thicknesses of wool and cotton. Her father was driving the horses, calling to them in a loud harsh voice. She waited for him to come towards her.

'Here, Pop.' She handed him the jar of milk and the paper bag of cookies. He ate and drank greedily.

'Kind o' cold work,' he said; 'but I guess the sun's coming out.'

It did come out, and the day grew warmer. Susie cut and slashed and chopped and sliced with her big knife. Her arms were tired, but her feet and hands were not so cold as they had been in the morning.

The sun brought out the bright hues of the red and yellow trees, and Susie thought the world looked like a beautiful colored picture.

She worked on faithfully till mealtime, and again in the afternoon. Then she had to give up.

'Mom,' she said, her face puckered and her voice faint and ashamed, 'I can't do any more. My arms hurt, and my back, too.'

'All right.' Mrs. Siegefried looked at her sharply. 'You go in the house. Don't work any more to-day.'

Susie had a miserable feeling that she was 'no good.' She went into the house, where Karl was staying with Bertha, who was sound asleep. Susie cried a little, and lay on the couch cuddling her kitty. When Bertha woke, Big Sister felt well enough to take the child up from her crib and feed her.

A week and more dragged on, and every day seemed harder than the one before. Susie helped in the field and in the house, as much as she could, though Beatrice and Eleanor scolded about her working; and even Mr. Bolton came to Mrs. Siegefried and said, 'You ought not to let Susie work too hard.'

'Oh, she just does a little,' answered Mrs. Siegefried. 'We all got to pitch in and get the beets lifted.'

At last every big dirty beet was out of the ground and hauled to the railroad station, and the fields were scattered with drying leaves and stalks. And then, when everything was over, Susie gave out and had a

fever and a pain somewhere inside, and spent two days in bed.

'Another time,' she heard her mother say, as she began packing up the clothes for the family, 'we don't let Susie do so much. She ain't built to be a real good worker. She's more for studying, I guess.'

'It's a good thing Karl's coming along,' Mr. Siegefried replied. 'We're going to have a good worker when he gets a little older, you can make up your mind to that.'

'Yes. Maybe.' Mrs. Siegefried went on with her work, and did not seem to have much to say.

How Susie dreaded to see the packing finished, and hear the words which would mean going away from the Bolton farm.

'Oh, I wish we could stay,' she muttered, over and over.

But her mother said, over and over, too: 'We can't stay.'

Every day, Allie Sykes put her arm around Susie and said, 'Oh, dear! It just seems awful that you have to go.' And then she would cry a little, and Susie would cry a few tears if no one was watching.

Miss Hart, the teacher, said two or three times, 'I wish you were going to stay, Susie. I want you in my reading class. And I'm going to read such a nice book aloud that I want you to hear it. You always look up at me in such an interested way.' Susie could have cried again when she heard this. 'And I want you to

speak a piece when we have our show-off day just before Thanksgiving,' the teacher went on. Susie thought perhaps she would not like that so much, but she felt comforted and miserable as well, when the teacher said, 'You're one of my best pupils, Susie Siegefried.'

Beatrice and Eleanor were busy with their school, but every time that Susie saw them, either at the Little House when they came to visit her, or at the Big House when she went to have a book read to her, they would say, 'Oh, dear, Susie, it just doesn't seem as if you're really going away! There ought to be some way of keeping you.' And Susie would feel so badly that she could not keep her lip from trembling or her eyes from filling with tears. Then Eleanor would put her hand on Susie's arm, and say, 'Oh, don't cry! Maybe you won't go.' But Susie did not have any hope of staying.

The worst thing, almost, was leaving Blinky-Cat. He was getting to be a big half-grown kitten, handsome and playful and affectionate. When Susie came home from school, he seemed to be watching for her, and he would run and caper around her, and rub his head against her ankles, and look up into her face and say, '*Prrr-meaouw?*' as if he were asking if she loved him. Eleanor had said that she would look after him, and that he might stay at the barn; but Susie felt that her heart would break if she had to leave her beloved kitten behind.

Now Herman had his money for his work with the beets — that is, the last payment, which was the biggest one; and it was time to get ready to go. But life, as everybody finds, is full of strange surprises.

When everything was almost ready to be put on the wagon and taken to the railroad station; when the curtains were down, and the dishes stowed away in barrels, and the trunk ready to have a few last aprons and stockings crammed in, something quite startling came to pass.

Susie, looking out of the kitchen window one Saturday afternoon (Karl was out behind the barn playing with one of the Nelson boys, and she and her mother were alone) saw Mr. and Mrs. Bolton coming down the lane from the bridge. Mrs. Bolton was bare-headed, with a red scarf over her shoulders. After a word with her mother, Susie ran to let the callers in.

'How do you do?' said Mrs. Siegefried politely.

It was rather overwhelming for her to have both Mr. and Mrs. Bolton come to see her. Susie was wondering what they wanted. Perhaps they had just come to say that they were sorry the Siegefrieds were going. Mr. and Mrs. Bolton both spoke nicely to Susie.

'Where's Herman?' asked Mr. Bolton.

'He's out in the barn, I guess, cleaning it up to leave,' said Anna. 'He wants everything should be right when we go.'

'I want to speak to both of you,' said Mr. Bolton.

'Maybe Susie would run out to the barn and call her father.'

Susie ran out to the little red barn, behind the house. 'Hey, Pop-pa!' she cried, 'Mr. Bolton wants to talk to you.' She looked strained and excited, as if she knew that something important was going to happen.

Herman came down the ladder from the loft. He was roughly dressed and covered with dust.

'What does he want?' he asked curiously.

'I don't know,' answered Susie.

Herman stood brushing himself with his hands, and beating the dust out of his clothes. Susie ran back to the house.

'He's coming,' she panted.

'Have you changed your mind now?' smiled Mrs. Bolton from her seat in the best big chair. 'Do you feel glad to go back to the city?'

'Oh, no! I want to stay here,' cried Susie plaintively.

'She just thinks she can't go,' sighed Mrs. Siegefried. 'She's had it real good here, except maybe working so hard sometimes. She likes your girls so much. And she wants to keep her cat, too. She can hardly sleep, worrying over that cat.'

'Poor child!' said Mrs. Bolton, almost in a whisper.

Susie felt a swelling and choking in her throat. She felt as if she must cry, and yet she didn't want to burst out sobbing before the two callers. She gave a look at her dear black-and-white kitten, stretched so

innocently under the warm stove, and then the little girl shrank behind her mother's chair, where her sad face might not be noticed.

Herman came in, looking bashful and bewildered. 'Well, Herman, we thought we'd come down and have a talk with you and your wife,' said Mr. Bolton. 'Something has happened that might change your plans. It's too bad we didn't find out about it before you got to packing up.'

The Siegefrieds all stared.

'What is it?' asked Anna breathlessly.

'Why, we've discovered that Henry doesn't intend to stay on the farm with us during the winter,' was the answer. 'He's kept it pretty close until now. He's decided to be married, and he's going over into Adams County to stay with his wife's folks, and help in a sawmill they've got over there.'

The Siegefrieds sat dumb. What did Henry's going mean to them? Perhaps it might mean a good deal.

'When does he think he'll go?' asked Herman steadily.

'Pretty soon now; as soon as the potatoes are out of the ground, and the best part of the corn is husked,' said Mr. Bolton. He was silent for a moment. 'Well, Herman,' he went on, 'would you like to stay here, in his place?'

'Oh!' Susie gave a little gasp and clutched at her mother's shoulder.

'Don't stay if you don't want to,' said Mr. Bolton

hastily. 'Maybe you could make more in the city. But you could have the use of the house here — it would be empty all winter anyhow — and so your rent wouldn't cost you anything.'

'And we have a nice coal stove you could use,' added Mrs. Bolton. 'It's been out in our shed ever since we put the furnace in the house. It would keep your house as warm as toast. It doesn't burn so very much coal, either.'

'I guess we could keep warm, all right,' said Anna, while Susie listened anxiously. She could not see her mother's face, but she kept staring at her father's. 'Do you want to stay, Herman?' Anna asked in a low voice. She was trying not to show what she wanted, herself.

Herman was thinking, in his slow way. He had made up his mind to go to the city, and it was hard for him to fix his mind on anything else. Susie ran out from behind her mother's chair.

'Say you'll stay, Pop-pa,' she cried in a pleading voice. 'Oh, please say you'll stay!'

'Why, I guess I'd like to,' said Herman uncertainly. 'It's up to Anna here. If she wants to stay, I'd like to awful well. I guess we wouldn't *save* any more money in the city, even if we *made* more. How about it, Anna? What do you want to do?'

'I'd like to stay,' said Anna promptly. 'I think it would be good, Herman, for us to stay. Susie likes it here, and Karl's real happy, too.'

'I could keep my catty,' murmured Susie, gulping. Mrs. Bolton threw her an understanding smile.

'Susie, she's crazy to stay,' repeated Mrs. Siegefried.

'Then you think you'll stay with us, eh?' said Mr. Bolton looking pleased. 'That's good. You could have the beets again in the spring, if you wanted them, just the same as this year.'

'I guess we'd all like to be here,' answered Herman; 'so if it's all the same to you, we'll just keep right on where we are.'

'Oo — oo! Goody, goody, goody!' burst out Susie, dancing up and down. 'I can keep my kitty, and I can see Eleanor and Bee-ah-triss. I can go to school, and be with Allie Sykes, and I can hear the story that Teacher's going to read, and I can do — just everything! Oh, I'm so glad!'

Then she remembered that Mr. and Mrs. Bolton were looking at her, and she stopped dancing and ran behind her mother's chair again.

'We could get the children to school on snowy days,' said Mr. Bolton. 'And say, Herman, why don't you buy a car? Your family would enjoy it a lot.'

'A car!' Herman winked hard with astonishment. He had never thought of such a thing as owning a car.

'Yes,' said Mr. Bolton with an encouraging laugh. 'The Bardwells down the road have an old Ford that they'd sell for almost nothing. They've got a new

one, you know, and they've just been keeping the old one for errands. You'd better buy it, Herman. You could tinker it up yourself.'

'A car! We never thought we could ever have one!' exclaimed Anna Siegefried, looking shocked.

'Of course you can have one here,' said Mr. Bolton. 'You couldn't very well in the city, because there's so much traffic, and you'd have to pay so much for a garage. It's a little late to get one now, but you could drive it up to Christmas, anyhow, and let it stand in the barn till spring ——'

'The licenses cost so much,' objected Herman, 'and the gasoline and everything.'

'They do cost something,' Mr. Bolton agreed. 'Oh, well, you can make up your mind later about a car, and I'm willing to wager that you'll get one.'

Susie gave a kind of little snorting gasp from her corner. To own a car seemed to her the most wonderful thing in the world. She didn't care what kind: all cars looked alike to her. She only knew that one rode blissfully in them through woods and fields and towns that seemed like fairyland.

'What a pity that you packed up your things,' said Mrs. Bolton regretfully, as she rose to go.

'Oh, that makes no matter,' said Anna, smiling broadly. 'It takes not very long to pull them out again. Susie will be glad to get her curtains up again, but I'll wash them, the first thing.'

'Now, Mrs. Siegefried,' said Mrs. Bolton, 'one day

in the week — every week — Susie is to be our girl. She's to come up and stay over night, and stay all day, except for going to school, when it's a school day. In that way she will have a chance to be with our girls, and learn what they have to tell her, and listen to the radio, and play games — and — oh, a lot of other things. It will be a good change for her, and our girls will enjoy having her for a companion. Won't you let her do that?'

Susie could hardly believe her ears. She waited, holding her breath, for her mother's answer.

'Of course I'll let her go,' said Mrs. Siegefried slowly. 'I know it will be good for her. She'll learn to speak better than we can show her, and she'll learn manners and reading, and she'll have a good time. I want her to learn a lot and have a good time,' she added wistfully. 'Susie, she's a great girl to study and know things, and she ought to have more than we can give her. We'll miss her every day she's gone, but we'll be glad when she comes back, too.'

'One day a week isn't such a long time to let her go,' smiled Mrs. Bolton.

'You're awful good to want her,' answered Mrs. Siegefried.

'We intended to ask you to let her stay with us all winter, if you went away,' said the other lady. She put her arm over Susie's shoulder. 'The girls were talking about it last night, and they said they wanted to have her. And then to-day Henry told us he was

leaving, and that changed everything. So we'll only borrow Susie, instead of having her to ourselves.'

Susie was dumb with the surprises which the last few minutes had opened before her. She could only look up at Mrs. Bolton and then at her mother with grateful eyes.

'So it's all settled,' laughed Mr. Bolton. 'Things take a queer turn sometimes. I'm glad you're going to stay, Herman. I'll give you as good wages as I can, and we can help you out with potatoes and other kinds of food for the winter. I'm sure you won't lose anything, and maybe you'll be happier here.'

'No danger but what we will,' answered Herman earnestly.

'We're glad we found such a good place,' said Mrs. Siegefried. Tears were in her eyes. 'We haven't had it so easy, going around the way we have. We'll be glad to settle down for a while, and we want to do the best we can for the children.'

'We know how it is to feel like that,' said Mrs. Bolton, with sympathy. 'Well, dear,' she went on, turning to Susie, 'the girls will be down to tell you how glad they are that you're not leaving us. And they'll ask your mother to pick out one day next week when you're to be our girl.'

Susie nodded. She was so happy that she hardly knew what to say. She managed to stammer her thanks, without being sure of the words she used.

With cheerful good-byes, the Boltons went out and shut the door.

'Oh, we're going to stay, we're going to stay!' sang Susie, laughing and skipping like a little wild thing. 'Oh, I'm so glad! I'm so glad!'

Herman went back to cleaning the barn, and Mrs. Siegefried went to take Bertha out of her crib. Susie heard Beatrice and Eleanor calling and hallooing, as they crossed the bridge. Snatching Mr. Blinky-Cat from his warm nook under the stove, Susie held his soft furry head against her cheek while she danced around and around.

THE END

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LITTLE RAG DOLL

By Ethel Calvert Phillips

THIS is the story of a Little Rag Doll who ran away from home because Harriet Ann didn't know how to treat a doll, and didn't even give her a name. So the Little Rag Doll called herself Dilly and set out to find a happier home. In the huckleberry patch shabby little Dilly met a fairy, Mrs. Thimbletop, who longed to go housekeeping. So gay Mrs. Thimbletop and gentle Dilly walked off and came at last to a little girl's playhouse, nicely furnished and empty, except for a plump cat, Grandma Reddy. The three agreed to go to housekeeping.

There are eighty pictures, four in color, by Lois Lenski.

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